

道徳經

THE BOOK  
OF  
THE SIMPLE WAY

(2)ZF.251

h/c

2/6



22501672954





16

Edm. Snell Esq. M.D.

with sincere regards.

Walter Gorn-Old

29 Aug. '04



THE BOOK OF THE SIMPLE WAY





75766

# THE BOOK OF THE SIMPLE WAY OF LAOTZE

THE CONTEMPORARY OF CONFUCIUS, CHINA, B.C. 604

A NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE TEXT OF  
THE *TAO-TEH-KING*

With Introduction and Commentary

BY

WALTER GORN OLD, M.R.A.S.

LONDON  
PHILIP WELLBY  
6 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN  
1904

Wellcome Library  
for the History  
and Understanding

(2) ZF. 251.

To  
ANDREW CARNEGIE,  
An Exponent  
of the  
RATIONAL PHILANTHROPY :  
which, by  
Feeding the Root,  
instead of  
Lopping the Branches,  
stimulates development from within ;  
and by the  
\* Supreme Charity of Letting Alone,  
enables the world to reform itself :  
This  
Modern version of an Old Philosophy  
is most cordially  
DEDICATED.

\* *Vide pp. 128, 129.*



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
CHAPTER	
I. MARKING OUT THE PATH . . . . .	25
II. SELF-PERFECTION . . . . .	27
III. RESTING THE PEOPLE . . . . .	29
IV. THE CAUSELESS . . . . .	30
V. THE VALUE OF NOTHING . . . . .	31
VI. THE ORIGIN OF THINGS . . . . .	33
VII. HIDING THE LIGHT . . . . .	34
VIII. THE EASY NATURE . . . . .	35
IX. MAKING THINGS EQUAL . . . . .	37
X. WHAT IS POSSIBLE . . . . .	38
XI. THE USE OF NOTHING . . . . .	40
XII. SHUTTING THE DOORS . . . . .	41
XIII. PREVENTING A FALL . . . . .	42
XIV. PRAISING THE VOID . . . . .	44
XV. EXHIBITING VIRTUE . . . . .	46
XVI. GOING HOME . . . . .	48
XVII. BEING NATURAL . . . . .	51
XVIII. PATCHING UP . . . . .	52
XIX. REVERTING TO NATURE . . . . .	54
XX. HOLDING ALOOF . . . . .	55
XXI. THE EMPTY SOURCE . . . . .	57
XXII. INCREASING THE SMALL . . . . .	59

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII. NON-IDENTIFICATION . . . .	61
XXIV. UNDESIRABLE HONOURS . . . .	63
XXV. APPREHENDING THE VOID . . . .	64
XXVI. THE VIRTUE OF GRAVITY . . . .	66
XXVII. THE USE OF SKILL . . . .	68
XXVIII. BECOMING A CHILD . . . .	70
XXIX. NON-ACTION . . . .	71
XXX. DECLINING FROM STRIFE . . . .	73
XXXI. CEASING FROM WAR . . . .	75
XXXII. INTELLIGENT VIRTUE . . . .	77
XXXIII. DISCERNING VIRTUE . . . .	79
XXXIV. THE PERFECT CONDITION . . . .	81
XXXV. THE VIRTUE OF BOUNTY . . . .	82
XXXVI. THE COVERT AGREEMENT . . . .	83
XXXVII. THE ART OF GOVERNMENT . . . .	85
XXXVIII. OF VIRTUE . . . .	86
XXXIX. TRACING THE SOURCE . . . .	89
XL. RESIGNING WORK . . . .	92
XLI. LIKE AND UNLIKE . . . .	93
XLII. THE CHANGES OF TAO . . . .	96
XLIII. UNLIMITED USEFULNESS . . . .	98
XLIV. STANDING STILL . . . .	99
XLV. INDEFINITE VIRTUE . . . .	101
XLVI. CURBING DESIRE . . . .	103
XLVII. LOOKING ABROAD . . . .	105
XLVIII. THE DISTRESS OF KNOWLEDGE . . . .	108
XLIX. THE VIRTUE OF CONCESSION . . . .	110
L. THE VALUE OF LIFE . . . .	112
LI. CHERISHING VIRTUE . . . .	114
LII. GOING BACK TO THE CAUSE . . . .	116

# CONTENTS

ix

CHAPTER	PAGE
LIII. INCREASING EVIDENCE . . . .	118
LIV. THE ROOT AND ITS BRANCHES . . . .	120
LV. THE WONDERFUL HARMONY . . . .	123
LVI. THE MYSTERIOUS VIRTUE . . . .	125
LVII. THE GENUINE GOVERNMENT . . . .	127
LVIII. LETTING OTHERS REFORM THEMSELVES . . . .	130
LIX. PRESERVING THE TAO . . . .	132
LX. FILLING THE THRONE . . . .	134
LXI. THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY . . . .	136
LXII. PRACTICAL TAO . . . .	138
LXIII. FORETHOUGHT . . . .	141
LXIV. GUARDING THE SMALL . . . .	143
LXV. SIMPLE VIRTUE . . . .	146
LXVI. GOING BEHIND . . . .	148
LXVII. THREE PRECIOUS THINGS . . . .	150
LXVIII. IMITATING HEAVEN . . . .	152
LXIX. THE USE OF SUPREME VIRTUE . . . .	154
LXX. THE DIFFICULT RECOGNITION . . . .	156
LXXI. THE DISEASE OF KNOWING . . . .	158
LXXII. LOVING ONESELF . . . .	160
LXXIII. FREEDOM OF ACTION . . . .	161
LXXIV. THE FAULT OF COERCION . . . .	163
LXXV. THE EVIL OF AVARICE . . . .	166
LXXVI. THE DANGER OF STRENGTH . . . .	168
LXXVII. THE TAO OF HEAVEN . . . .	170
LXXVIII. ACCEPTING THE TRUTH . . . .	172
LXXIX. KEEPING ONE'S BOND . . . .	174
LXXX. STANDING ALONE . . . .	176
LXXXI. THE EVIDENCE OF SIMPLICITY . . . .	179
CONCLUSION . . . .	181





## PANTHEOS

*There is a Power Divine within the Heart of Things,  
Which circumvents the universe of worlds, and brings  
The Soul of all created things to final good;  
Which, ages gone, did take existence where it stood,  
And slowly fashion'd it to something pure and fair,—  
Though good in their beginnings all creations were;  
Yet growing better still, and last of all supreme,  
Th' intense superlative of Nature's pure extreme.  
This Power divine is bodied forth in him whose soul,  
Reflecting Good itself, doth comprehend the whole  
Of less perfected things, wherein the Light divine,  
Though hid by darker veil, hath never ceased to shine;  
By which all will at length but sure resolvèd be  
To something good as great, secure as it is free:  
Will be resolv'd again, ere Time its course hath run  
To where in Being's dawn its circle had begun;  
And Earth and errant Man, and Heaven and That divine,  
Like fibres of one heart will blend and intertwine.*



# INTRODUCTION

TO THE PHILOSOPHER AND HIS BOOK  
*THE TAO TEH*

LITTLE or nothing is known in regard to the early life of the old philosopher Laotze, but history reports that he was born in the province of Tchu, in the year B.C. 604, and he was therefore a contemporary of Buddha, in India, whose teachings, as reflected in such works as the Dhammapada, bear a remarkable resemblance to those of our author. These teachings were at a later date reiterated by Plato, and still later by the holy Nazarene. Indeed, all the great world-teachers appear to have enunciated the doctrine of Simplicity, and to have defined the Path in very similar language, but in distinct voices; all of them in contrast to the spirit of the age, and modified only by the circumstance of local colouring and inflection.

We find Laotze at an advanced age acting as curator of the Royal Library of Kao, from which he eventually retired in order to devote himself to quiet meditation in the mountains of the Ling-Po. He had hoped thus to pass at once beyond the circle of his worldly activities, as one who seeks the quiet and rest of his home after the heat and toil of the day. But the fame of the philosopher had gone before him. Among his followers was a guard of the Kwan Yin Pass. This man looked with jealous eyes

upon the setting of so great a luminary, and he therefore importuned the Sage to commit to writing some of his teachings before retiring into seclusion. Laotze therefore wrote a book called TAO TEH, to which the Chinese add the word "king" as a mark of respect. The philosopher thereafter went his way towards the Pass of Hsien-Ku, and was no more heard of by mortal man. Such is the simple history of the only work ascribed to this great and industrious man, who rightly bears the name of Laotze, the "Old Philosopher."

Between Laotze and the historian Sze-Ma, from whom this information is derived, there were many exponents of the philosophy of the Tao. The chief of these were Lieh-tze, Chuang-Tze, Hang-Fei, and Hwai-nan-tze. That the philosophy rapidly spread and cast its influence over the most learned minds of those days in China, is evident from the fact that the Imperial Library of Swei contained, at the end of the sixth century A.D., many copies of Laotze's work, all largely commentated. Under the patronage of the Han Dynasty (B.C. 202 to A.D. 263) the followers of the Tao flourished, and the Emperors themselves openly expressed their sympathy with the teachings of this school of thought. Thus King Tai, who began to reign in B.C. 156, ordered that the philosophy of Laotze should be studied at the Court, and thereafter the *Tao Teh* became a classic throughout the country, receiving the distinctive name of TAO-TEH-KING.

During this period the teachings of Kong-fu-Tze (Confucius) were much neglected, and rivalry sprang up between the adherents of the two systems of thought, very bitter criticism passing between them. That the secular teachings of Confucius ultimately prevailed, does not detract from

the inherent virtue of our author's philosophy, but rather indicates that the tenets of Confucius were better suited to the more active policy of succeeding rulers, and possibly also the inability of the masses to appreciate the ultimate working value of Taoism, or to rightly conceive the significance of its abstruse and seemingly paradoxical principles. Yet the highest truths must ever suffer by popular expression, seeing that our consciousness is bounded by relativity, and expressed only by reference to "the pairs of opposites." The sacerdotalism which the philosophy of Laotze assailed was akin to the Brahmanism of India at the time of Buddha's appearance, and to that of Roman Catholicism at the appearance of Luther.

Laotze was already in the winter of life when Confucius paid him a visit in the year B.C. 517, the old philosopher being then eighty-seven years of age, and Confucius, who was born on the 18th December, B.C. 550, at Lu, only thirty-three years. The celebrated teacher of the *Tao Teh* is said to have greatly impressed Confucius, who afterwards highly esteemed him. It has been said that Laotze visited India in the course of his many travels, but there seems no other ground for this statement than the close similarity of his philosophy to the principles of the Vedanta, and that of his ethical teachings to the contemporary doctrines of Buddha. It is to Chuang-Tze that we owe the record of the teachings of Laotze, as to Men-Tze we are indebted for the records of Confucius. But to neither, it would seem, do we owe the presentation of the pure doctrine of either of these great teachers; for Chuang-Tze and Men-Tze, the contemporary exponents of the two systems of thought, were very bitter enemies, and strong expressions of contumely are known to have passed between them and their

respective followers. On the other hand, it is fairly evident that Laotze and Kong-fu-Tze were good friends, and at most not far divided upon essential points.

The Rev. Aubrey Moore, in his notes to the translation of the *Writings of Chuang-Tze*, says :—

“By the time of Chuang-Tze, some two or three centuries after Laotze, Confucianism had become to some extent the established religion of China, and Taoism, like Republicanism in the days of the Roman Empire, became a mere *opposition de salon*. Under such circumstances the antagonism between the representatives of Laotze and Confucius would proportionately increase.”

The teachings of Confucius were essentially utilitarian, capable of very successful application to political, social, and moral questions, but containing little or nothing concerning the nature, origin, and destiny of the human soul. This was left to the school of mystical philosophy called the Taotze, under the leadership of Chuang-Tze. That the teachings of Confucius were not sufficient for the more metaphysical thinkers of that day in China is evident from the fact that Taoism successfully vied with Confucianism for a very long time ; and further, the subsequent introduction and wide acceptance of Buddhism shows that the spiritual side of Confucianism was inadequate to the needs of a vast multitude of people.

However, Taoism was never a popular or representative national religion, and did not succeed further than to secure the patronage of some few Emperors, such as Wang-Tai, whose name is erased from the sacred records of the Confucians, and the adherence of a minor portion of the nation. The ancient Shintoism has exerted an influence greater in every way than either the teaching of Laotze or



that of Confucius upon the Chinese as a nation, and the reason for this is not far to seek, for it needs only a presentation of some of the leading tenets of the Taotze to convince one that they would not long survive in the estimation of successive rulers with ever-increasing worldly ambitions. It is not until the eleventh century, and after the introduction of Buddhism into China, that we find Taoism forming the basis of a definite religious system with monasteries and schools, priests and acolytes, and all the ritual of an ecclesiastical order under the rulership of the Tsung Dynasty. Previously, it bore only the marks of an ethical philosophy, and necessarily the crystallisation of the doctrine, together with the "bells and pomegranates" and other embroidery of the plain vesture, must be regarded as signs of a rapid degeneration in its votaries rather than as a reflection upon the tendency of the pure doctrine itself, which, as we shall hereafter see, was opposed to the religious ritual in all its forms. For Laotze there was but one religion, the Way of Heaven (*Tao Tien*), and its expression was spontaneous as between the individual and Nature, like "the prattle of a child in the arms of its mother."

Before touching upon controversial points contained in the present work, it will be expedient to review some of the leading tenets of the doctrine of the *Tao Teh*, as revealed in the writings of Chuang-Tze.<sup>1</sup>

"Tao," a term which is said to be equivalent to the Sanskrit *Bodh* (wisdom or enlightenment), and used by the Chinese Buddhists to express that state, is among the Taotze a mystical term having a twofold significance. It is at once the Supreme Reason, the Logos, and Nature

<sup>1</sup> The *Writings of Chuang-Tze*. Trans. H. A. Giles, London. Quaritch, 1889.

the subject of reason ; the Alpha and Omega of all things, representing the "diversity in unity of nature, and the unity in diversity of God."

Here, at the outset, we are faced with the antinomial and paradoxical element common to all mystical systems, and more than usually prevalent in pantheistic conceptions such as Taoism is said to be. Yet this unity and diversity are one, and that One is Tao, and Tao is greater than God and greater than Nature, for in Tao both God and Nature are as one.

"Before Heaven was, Tao was. Spiritual things draw their spirituality therefrom, while the universe became (by it) what we behold it now. To Tao the zenith is not high nor the nadir low. No point in time is long ago, nor by lapse of ages has It grown old."

Laotze makes a distinction between the Supreme Source of all things—Tao the ineffable, and Nature the mother of all things. Tao, the essence of the Universal Spirit, self-existent, uncreate and eternal, the source of all creations and of all worlds, as of the gods who made and govern them, "is by nature One," says Laotze.

"One and universal is Tao, but the first has produced a second and the second a third, and these three are all things. In vain may your senses enquire concerning all these ; your reason alone can frame anything respecting them, and this will tell you that they are only One."<sup>1</sup>

Tao in this sense seems to correspond to the *Parabrahm* of the Vedantins, the *Ain Suph* of the Kabalists, the *Athy* of the Egyptians, and the *Monad* of the Greeks. Laotze says: "A man looks upon God as his father and loves

<sup>1</sup> *Book of God*, p. 36. E. V. Kenealy.



him in like measure. Shall we not then love That which is greater than God?" Hence it appears that in the conception of Laotze, Tao is not God, nor Nature, but comprehends both God and Nature, being the Supreme Essence of both Spirit and Substance. The idea of this universal and unchangeable Essence is not better conveyed, perhaps, than in the lines of Swinburne :—

"I am that which began ;  
Out of me the years roll,  
Out of me God and Man,  
I am equal and whole ;

God changes and man, and the form of them bodily ; I am  
the Soul."<sup>1</sup>

Thus says Laotze :—

"There is an Infinite Being which was before Heaven and Earth. How calm it is, how free ! It lives alone and changes not. It moves everywhere, but is not affected. We may regard it as the universal Mother. I know not its name. I call it Tao."

Totally unlike the doctrine of Confucius based upon Charity and Duty to one's neighbour, the Taotze recommends the natural expression of inherent virtue, which, as the attribute of Tao, will flow through the mind and develop the qualities of the Soul in their original integrity if its action be unimpeded by the weed-growth of vicious habits or the veneer of worldly consequence. For all personal effort, forcing of faculty, striving after a semblance of that which is already possessed by man through Nature, all Egoism in short, is regarded by the apostles of the Tao as so much waste of energy, leading finally to competition, strife, self-assertion, dogmatism, interference, tyranny, diplomacy, and deceit.

<sup>1</sup> *Songs before Sunrise* : " Hertha."

Chuang-Tze, the Idealist, the Ezra of Taoism, and the Democritus of his day in China, led the reaction against the materialist teachings of Confucius, and it is to him that we owe our knowledge, however incomplete, of the doctrine of Laotze. It is true that his enthusiasm has carried him far beyond the original statement of the doctrine as embodied in the *Tao-teh-king*. And although, it is true, this Philistine has not infrequently called in the Samson of Utilitarian Philosophy in order to make sport with him, yet we may console ourselves with the knowledge that the laugh was not always or finally against the blind man. The beauty and power of Chuang-Tze's writings, their quaint cynicism and effusive wit, no less than the subtlety of metaphor so aptly linked to vigour of expression, have placed them deservedly in the foremost rank of Chinese literature. He is at all events faithful in his presentation of fundamental doctrine, as, for instance, in the concept of the Essential Unity of things, that of the Union of Impossibles, that of the integrity of Nature, of Freedom through restraint of the Senses, of Attainment by Non-action, and some others of minor importance.

In regard to the doctrine of Essential Unity, Laotze says that this can only be perceived by "our natural clearness of sight," for everyone is born in Tao, from Tao. So Chuang-Tze says: "All that a fish requires is water; all that a man wants is Tao." The Union of Impossibles, ascribed to Plato, is in Taoism the basic doctrine, and is called by our author "the very axis of Tao." He calls it the theory of Alternatives, and speaking of the relation of the Objective and Subjective, he says:—

"When one is born the other dies. When one is possible the other is impossible. When one is affirmative the other

is negative. Which being the case, the true Sage rejects all distinctions of this and that, and takes his refuge in God, thus placing himself in subjective relations with all things."

The fact that the changing view-point of the thinker does not alter the nature of Things-in-themselves constitutes the main argument for the essential unity of things. Nothing can be added to or taken from one while that One is all, and that All one. The objective and subjective worlds are not separable except in an absolute dualism, and all appearances to the contrary are only appearances consequent upon the identifying of oneself with one or the other standpoint. Hence all distinctions cease, and all conflict is at an end in the recognition of this fundamental doctrine of the essential unity of things. On this point Chuang-Tze is profoundly witty.

"Only the truly wise," he says, "understand this principle of the identity of things. To place oneself in subjective relations to externals, without consciousness of their objectivity, this is the Tao. But to wear out one's intellect in an obstinate adherence to the individuality of things, not recognising that they are in fact all One, this is called Three in the Morning. What is that? asked Tzu-Yu. A keeper of monkeys said in regard to their rations of nuts that each should have three in the morning and four at night. But at this the monkeys were very angry, so the keeper said they should have *four* in the morning and three at night. And with this the monkeys were very well pleased. The actual number of nuts remained the same, but there was an adaptation to the likes and dislikes of those concerned. Such is the principle of putting oneself into subjective relations with externals. Wherefore the true Sage, while regarding contraries as identical, adapts himself to the laws of Heaven. This is called following two courses at once."

It need not escape our notice, while enjoying the wit of this illustration, how fitting is the symbolism employed. The trick of comparing the Confucians to monkeys we may pass over. But in speaking of the subjective and objective worlds, what is more fitting than the use of the number seven as representing the totality of things, the seven worlds of most ancient conception, with three in the morning and four at night, and a basic identity in the nature of the things divided? For it is surely well known that the number Seven (tsat or tsieh) among all oriental nations, as with the Kabalists and the Gnostics, represents satisfaction, completeness, totality, perfection. The Triad and Quaternary, symbolic of Spirit and Matter, are almost universally associated with the Noumenal and Phenomenal worlds; the world of Thought and the world of Things; the Subjective and the Objective; with Man, the cogniser and thinker, in relations with both. The association of "the morning" with the number Three and of "the night" with the number Four is an extension, and a familiar one, of the gnosis. It relates the Spirit to light and Matter to darkness, and recalls the Two Worlds of the Rosicrucian philosophy and the all-embracing dogma: *Demon est Deus inversus*. So also with the Egyptians, man, compounded of Soul and body, is represented to be in continual relations with the two worlds, of which the initiated carry the key. It is expressed in the symbol  $\hat{\text{A}}$  called *Ankh*, i.e. I, the Ego, the embodied soul.

The doctrine of *Teh*, or true virtue, teaches that things are what they are, not by virtue of the names we give them, nor by reason of the way in which we view them, but because of their natural affinities and antagonisms, their inherent qualities, their place in the scale of creations, and

hence by reason of the uses to which they can naturally be put. *Tao* gives us the true perception of the natures of things and *Teh* instructs us as to their uses. And the right use of things, according to Laotze, lies in the natural and unimpeded existence of every form of life. Thus the virtue of a tree is in its growth, the putting forth of leaves and flowers and fruit. But if a tree be trained to make much wood and the wood be cut to make a coffin, two things are by that circumstance lacking in virtue; the tree, in that it has ceased to be a tree and become in part a coffin, and the man, who would hoard up a carcase and deprive Nature of her dues. The flowers simply live and grow, and no one denies that they are beautiful. The good man confers a blessing on the world by merely living.

From such considerations Laotze disagreed with Confucius as to the ultimate utility of his doctrine of Charity and Duty to one's neighbour. "Truth does not proclaim itself," said the Sage, "virtue does not display itself, neither does reason contend with a man; perfect courage is not unyielding, neither is charity displayed in action. Virtue consists in being true to oneself and charity in letting alone."

"By the virtue which is not intentional," says the Sage, "even the supernatural may be subdued." Therefore Charity and Duty to one's neighbour are not essential virtues, but simply the accidentals of virtue; and "except a man be perfect he cannot determine their place," says Laotze.

So Chuang-Tze writes:—

"All the world knows that the virtue of doing good is not essential virtue," and, indeed, it is easy to see that "doing good" may be but the blundering of ignorance, the inconsequence of vice.



"The man of virtue remains indifferent to his environment. His original integrity is undisturbed. His knowledge transcends the senses. By virtue of which his heart expands to enfold all those who come to take refuge therein. Going forth without effort, advancing without design, all things following in his wake. Such is the man of complete virtue."

Of such an one it is said :—

"He will bury gold in the hillside and cast pearls into the sea. He will not strive for wealth nor fight for fame. He will not rejoice in old age, nor grieve over early death. He will not take pride in success nor feel remorse in failure. By gaining a throne he is not enriched, nor can world-wide empire give him glory. His glory is to know that all things are One, and life and death but phases of the same existence."

The contrast of these teachings, resting as they do on the fundamental concept of the perfection of Tao (as embracing both the providence of God and the integrity of Nature) with those of the Confucian school which sought to enrich the mind of man with rationalism, his life by arts and sciences, and his morality by civil government, is very striking, and nowhere more marked than in those passages in the writings of Taoism which deal with the nature of true virtue and the end and aim of the virtuous.

Philosophy, it is argued, causes dissensions and fills the mind with doubts. Arts create appetites which science cannot satisfy, thus rendering life full of misery and man an object of pity; while civil government, which hedges the man about with laws, takes away liberty, destroys freedom of action, and undermines the foundations of true morality. That this was the view of life taken by Laotze is evident from the following caustic admonition to Con-

fucius when discussing with him the favourite theme of charity and duty to one's neighbour :—

“The chaff from winnowing will blind a man so that he cannot tell the points of the compass. Mosquitoes will keep him awake all night with their biting. And just in the same way this talk of charity and duty to one's neighbour drives me nearly crazy. Sir, strive to keep the world in its original simplicity. And as the wind bloweth wheresoever it listeth, so let virtue establish itself. Wherefore this undue energy, as though searching for a fugitive with a big drum? The swan is white without a daily bath; the raven is black without daily colouring itself. The original simplicity of black and of white are beyond the reach of argument. The vista of fame and reputation are hardly worth enlarging. When the pond dries up and the fish are left upon dry ground, to moisten them with the breath or to damp them with a little spittle is not to be compared with leaving them as at first in their native rivers and lakes.”

No use to regret the state of things “that are not as they were,” unless it inspires the hope that some day we may regain the child-state we have lost. And the belief that man's departure from the state of pristine purity was included in the scheme of human evolution—a belief founded on the mere existence in our day of so many *acquired* evils, quite as much as upon the partial realisation in ourselves of a divine inflection—this belief, I say, inspires us with the hope of an eventual restoration of mankind to its divine heritage. Indeed, it would seem that the world is even now in a state of transition from the Tao of native purity to the Tao of acquired virtue, from a condition of primitive innocence to that of ultimate perfection.

This is the view taken by Edward Carpenter in his *Civilisation: its Cause and Cure*, wherein he says:—

“Possibly this is a law of history, that when man has run through every variety of custom a time comes for him to be freed from it—that is, he uses it indifferently, according to his requirements, and is no longer a slave to it; all human practices find their use, and none are forbidden. At this point, whenever reached, ‘morals’ come to an end and humanity takes their place—that is to say, there is no longer any code of action; but the one object of all action is the deliverance of the human being, the establishment of equality between oneself and another, the entry into a new life, which new life, when entered into, will be glad and perfect, because there is no more any effort or strain in it; but it is the recognition of oneself in others eternally.”

Laotze taught that the supreme virtue was only to be recovered by man on his return to the true life. This is effected by what is called “fasting of the heart,” that is, by self-abstraction, the higher indifference, or non-attachment to the fruits of action. It is not effected, we are told, by specific acts of charity, nor by religious austerities, nor by striving after the great and cherished ideal, but simply by being oneself, by the spontaneous expression of one’s own nature, and by submission of the will to the laws of Heaven.

“The pure men of old,” he says, “acted as they were moved, without calculation, not seeking to secure results. They laid no plans. Therefore, failing, they had no cause for regret; succeeding, no cause for congratulation.” Believing in the perfection of Nature as comprehended in God, they did no more than live, breathing with their whole being in the unrestrained joy of existence, and not seeking to make the human supplement the divine. Why



all this straining after wealth and fame, as if the getting of these were the end and aim of life? Why, indeed, except for the satisfaction of those desires which have become the needs of our existence? Would it not be easier for us all to take the counsel of Laotze, the advice of Democritus, and make our wealth to consist in the reducing of our wants?

“You are going too fast,” says Laotze. “You see your egg and expect it to crow. You look at your bow and expect to have broiled duck before you. I will say a few words at random, and do you listen at random. How does the Sage seat himself by the Sun and Moon and hold the universe in his grasp? He blends everything into one harmonious whole, rejecting the confusion of this and that. Rank and precedence, which the vulgar prize, the Sage stolidly ignores. The revolutions of years shall pass him undisturbed, æons of ages shall leave his soul unscathed. The universe itself may pass away, but he will flourish still. How do I know that the love of life is not after all a snare? How do I know but that he who dreads to die is like a little child who has lost his way and cannot find his home?”

This “fasting of the heart,” or self-abstraction by means of which the possession of Tao is effected, is not, as some may think, the indifference which has its root in self-love, save in so far as that love of Self includes the welfare of all living things. The doctrine of Non-action does not inculcate bodily withdrawal from the world of action. This, to certain natures, would be to some extent easy of accomplishment, especially in the direction of abstaining from action that was uncongenial to them. “It is easy enough to stand still,” says Chuang-Tze; “the difficulty is to walk without touching the ground.” By this we understand that it is hard to act except in response to earthly attractions,

or to make real progress without change of position. It is in the sense of non-attachment of oneself to the fruits of action that this doctrine of Non-action is to be understood and received. It is not by action in relation to oneself that liberty is obtained and Tao realised. The *Vichara Sāgara*, an Indian scripture, has this significant passage : "By the action of walking a place is reached, but Moksha (liberation) cannot be reached by any action, since the Spirit is everywhere present." The doctrine of Renunciation, as the means of salvation, is familiar to the Christian mind, and present in every true system of religious thought. Self-abnegation, as the way to possession, yet not involving the desire to possess, is thus referred to in the Bhagavad Gītā (chap. v. 10-14) :—

"He who acts without attachment, dedicating all to the Supreme Spirit, is not touched by sin, as the lotus leaf is not wetted by water. . . . The doer of right action, abandoning its merits, attains rest through devotion. The doer of wrong action, attached by desire to its fruits, remains bound. . . . The Spirit creates neither actorship nor acts in the world, nor yet the connection between action and its results ; but Nature does so continuously."

By acting while separating oneself from action, and by reaching the fruit of action without desiring it, man ceases to identify himself with good or evil in the world and reaches a state wherein diversity is perceived as unity, and all distinctions cease. Hope is no more, there is nothing unfulfilled ; ambition has no aim, for all things are attained ; and effort has no use, for necessity has ceased.

"Then Sorrow ends, for Life and Death have ceased ;  
How should lamps flicker when their oil is spent ?  
The old sad count is clear, the new is clean ;  
Thus hath a man content."—*Light of Asia*, Book viii.

Then follows the question, Can one attain liberation for oneself alone? Laotze says No. Buddha says No. Christ says No. Not one of all the great Teachers and Saints ever desired or thought of such beatitude for himself alone. Indeed, it seems to be a law of spiritual evolution that the nearer one comes to the attainment of spiritual bliss the less he desires it for himself alone.

“Can one get Tao so as to have it for one’s own? Your very body is not your own, how then should Tao be? If my body is not my own, pray then whose is it? It is the delegated image of God. Your life is not your own; it is the delegated harmony of God. Your individuality is not your own; it is the delegated adaptability of God. Your posterity is not your own; it is the delegated exuviae of God. You move, but know not how. You are at rest, but know not why. You taste, but know not the cause. These are the operations of God’s laws. How then should you get Tao to have it for your own?”<sup>1</sup>

We may now turn to the work in hand, the *Tao-teh-king* of Laotze. There can be little doubt that any translation from the Chinese is capable of extreme flexibility and licence, of which, indeed, the translator must avail himself if he would rightly render the spirit rather than the letter of the text; and the spirit, after all, is the essential thing, if we follow the teaching of Laotze. It is safe to say that the more literal the translation may be the more obscure is its meaning. This is due to the difference of construction in the two languages, and the great flexibility which attaches to the use of the Chinese monosyllables (the same word being constantly used in varying mood) and the entire absence of any rules of syntax. In addition to these

<sup>1</sup> The *Writings of Chuang-Tze*.

ordinary difficulties, the particular inflection of many terms used by our author to express abstract principles has occasioned many differences of translation. To take only a few instances of words which have been much discussed among translators, the word *Tao* (principle) has the significance of the Way, and carries a mystical signification very difficult of direct expression and similar in this respect to terms used by mystical writers the world over. The word has been variously expressed by the terms Logos, Voice, Way, Path, Truth, Reason, etc., and these cannot be taken literally when referring to the Supreme Cause. Moreover, although it would appear that *Tao* corresponds in meaning to such terms as Parabrahm, Ain Suph, etc., yet the context will not admit of an uniform adherence to any of these or their English equivalents. The Logos, or Word, as expressed in the Chinese, is not rendered by *Tsae*, *Yen*, or *Yin*, which refer to the ordinary means of expression by sound, but is compounded of two radicals, *Show*, which means head, beginning, source or origin, and *Cho*, to go forth upon the path; hence, the First Emanation.<sup>1</sup> M. Abel Remusat said of this word *Tao*: "It does not seem capable of proper translation save by the word Logos in the triple sense of Sovereign Being, the Reason, and the Word." Mr. Balfour, in his translation of Chuang-Tze, has employed the word *Tao* as a synonym of Nature, and though no doubt his conception of Nature may be of something that transcends the senses and even the reason, yet it is doubtful whether he would carry it so far as to include the statement of Laotze concerning *Tao*, in the sentence: "It is more ancient than God." *Tao* as the *Way* is understood by

<sup>1</sup> *Tao* or *Taou* is not a radical. It is frequently translated by "Doctrine."

Balfour to mean the Processes, Methods, and Laws of Nature ; Tao as the *Reason* is taken to mean the Intelligence working in all created things, producing, preserving, and life-giving ; while Tao as the Doctrine denotes the true *Doctrine* respecting the laws and mysteries of Nature. Thus the Way, Reason, and Doctrine of Tao are referred to the effects, causes, and principles embraced in the being and operations of Nature ; and the philosophy of Laotze is thus held to embody a system of thought which engages the intuitional, rational, and perceptive powers of the human mind in regard to the great subject of thought, Man, the cogniser of Nature.

It is permitted to think, however, that Tao, as embracing both God and Nature, is altogether beyond the reach of human thought, certainly beyond definition, and referring to a state of Being of which we have not the remotest logical conception, and possibly only the vaguest intuitive apperception. By the use of the scientific imagination we may possibly extend our conception of the operations of Nature until it assumes the attributes of Deity ; and in all, and through all, and around all is God—the Essence, the Life, the Intelligence—working, breathing, illuminating, present in every operation ; scintillating in the very minds that think these things, making their conception possible. For whatever we may predicate of God or of Nature, above, around, below, within, beyond all is THAT, the ineffable and inscrutable TAO. The term seems rather to be the equivalent of the mystical term *Sat*, of the Vedantin philosophy, used to designate the superlative state of Pure Being, itself unrelated while comprehending all relations.

The word *Teh* (virtue) is understood to be the equivalent of the Buddhistic term *Dharma*, as being the mode of



expression proper to Tao in its manifestations; its true meaning is conveyed in the words "virtue" and "use," the central idea being that of *proprium*, that which is proper to the nature of a being or thing, apart from the accidents of human polity, custom, and usage.

*Tien* is a word frequently used by Laotze to designate Heaven as a state of being, and also in reference to the Deity, as in our own phraseology. So by the phrase *Tao Tien* we may understand the Law of Divine Being, literally the Way (Path or cleavage) of Heaven. By *Tien Teh* we connote the Divine Operation, literally "Heaven-virtue," the virtue of everything being in its use. As to the phrase *Tao Teh*, which constitutes the title of this book by Laotze, we may use either the Law of Virtue, Path of Virtue, or any other phrase which connote the ideas of God and Nature and their operations in relation to man. The title after all is of subsidiary importance, and it would seem that we need not be too solicitous of names when the things themselves so far escape us. In translating the title TAO-TEH-KING, M. Julien adopts the phrase, "The Book of the Way and of Virtue." But while using this form in the title, he retains the word *Tao* in the text, and does not always translate *Teh* by the word "virtue"; and no doubt this method is warranted by the fact that no single term can be uniformly fitted to its context throughout the work. The extreme flexibility of the term Tao I consider to be most appropriate to the view of it presented in various parts of the book, as, for example, in chapter i. and chapter iv. In this respect it is similar to many of the terms used in the mystical philosophies of India, Greece, and Egypt, terms which escape definition by their wide suggestiveness.

As it is impossible to separate the ideas of operation and agent, virtue and being, as if one should speak of the Thinker as apart from thought, or Thought apart from the thinker, it cannot be said that Laotze's work deals with two independent subjects, as suggested by M. Julien's title: Of the Way, and of Virtue; and a form has therefore been adopted in the present instance which preserves the connection of the *Tao* and its *Teh*: "The Simple Way."

It should be remarked that the headings of the chapters form no part of the original work, but have been added by one of its many commentators. They are retained in the present version because of their quaint fitness.





# THE BOOK OF THE SIMPLE WAY OF LAOTZE

## I

### MARKING OUT THE PATH

THE Tao that is the subject of discussion is not the true Tao.

The quality which can be named is not its true attribute.

That which was before Heaven and Earth is called the Non-Existent.

The Existent is the mother of all things.

Therefore doth the wise man seek after the first mystery of the Non-Existent, while seeing in that which exists the Ultimates thereof.

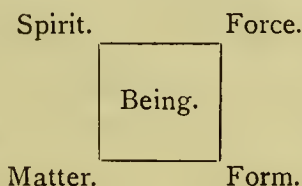
The Non-Existent and Existent are identical in all but name.

This identity of apparent opposites I call the profound, the great deep, the open door of bewilderment.

---

The Old Philosopher must not be mistaken for a Gymnast in thus placing his subject at the outset beyond the pale of discussion. Behind Brahma the Vedantins have placed Parabrahm; beyond the Elohim the Kabalists have set Ain Suph, an unfathomable depth of unthinkable mysteries, upon the clear surface of which, as upon a veil, a man may write whatever name he pleases; or standing there, robed in the thought of his own divine kinship, the pure in heart may look into its crystal depths and see Himself reflected. Can any man by searching find out God? asks the Hebrew. The Christ said, "The pure in heart shall *see* God." Laotze will tell us later on in his book the means whereby the seeker shall find, whether within himself or in the universe without. But since knowledge can only affirm, while doubt may reason and discuss, it is certain that "the Tao that is the subject of discussion is not the true Tao." And further, because to qualify is to define, and to define is to limit, and because every limitation connotes an imperfection, we can name no quality which is the real attribute of Tao. The Causal Principle of all effects Laotze calls the Non-Existent. The well-known philosophical gamut of Principles, Causes, Effects, and Ultimates is reduced by the Sage to the Non-Existent and the Existent, for seeing only One Cause (Tao), he regards all else as a single Effect (Nature). By Heaven we may therefore understand the spiritual, causal, or noumenal world, and by the Earth the material, physical

world of effects. Matter is the ultimate expression of Spirit, as form is that of force, and hence for every spiritual force there is a corresponding material form, and these, like the Non-Existent and Existent, are "identical in everything but name." We have, therefore, the philosophic square—



This identity of apparently opposite things the Sage very aptly calls the "open door of bewilderment," by which anyone may enter into the secrets of Nature, if only he knows the way.

## II

## SELF-PERFECTION

WHEN the world speaks of beauty as being beautiful, ugliness is at once defined.

When goodness is seen to be good, evil is at once apparent.

So do existence and non-existence mutually give rise to one another, as that which is difficult and that which is easy, distant and near, high and low, shrill and bass, preceding and following.

The Sage therefore is occupied only with that which is without prejudice.

He teaches without verbosity, he acts without effort ; he produces without possessing, he acts without regard to the fruit of action ; he brings his work to perfection without assuming credit ; and claiming nothing as his own, he cannot at any time be said to lose.

---

Laotze is not here concerned with the philosophic discussion of the "pairs of opposites," nor does he concern himself with the laws of Thought by which this dualism is induced in us, for he has already dispensed with the subject by affirming their essential identity ; but he shows that while we are in a state of separateness from Tao, this relationship of the mind to one thing at a time is the cause of endless contradictions and diversities. By pointing the fact that Beauty and Goodness are only recognised as beautiful and good from a consciousness of their opposites, he suggests that if they were qualities in universal possession they would be unrecognisable as such, for ugliness and evil would disappear with the consciousness of such qualities by comparison.

The all-sufficiency of Tao is illustrated in the last stanza by the life of the Sage. It is worthy of note that the doctrine of "acting without regard to the fruits of action" is the basic teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā, and is acknowledged to be the finest ethical scheme ever presented to the world. In this spirit the Christ said to his disciples, "These things I do not of myself, but of the Spirit of God which dwelleth in me." For none can assume credit to himself without having regard to the fruits of action.

## III

## RESTING THE PEOPLE

AVOIDING distinctions of merit among the people prevents jealousy.

Not setting a value on rare things prevents theft.

Not seeking the things of sense keeps the mind in peace.

Thus the Sage governs by ridding the heart of its desires, giving the stomach due satisfaction, by resting the muscles and strengthening the bones, by preserving the world from a knowledge of evil and hence from its desire, and by making those who have such knowledge afraid to use it.

He acts by non-action, and by this he governs all.

---

If merit and the reward of merit were taken away and integrity and virtue allowed to be their own reward, whatever good might be done would be done for its own sake. What a weeding out of political and social adventurers there would be ! The world would produce sound fruit, without the maggot of selfishness hidden at the core. If diamonds were as common

as pebbles on the shore, they would be little esteemed. Only those who set a value on rare things can say why diamonds are to be desired. It is certain that we cannot eat them, nor gain any intelligence from them, nor do they conduce to our spiritual welfare in any way. For cutting and grinding they have hardly an equal, but if you want stones broken on the highway, you had better find a man. Yet neither the jewel nor the stone-breaker assume any merit. It is we who esteem the one and disparage the other, thus putting a premium on theft and discounting honest work. The Sage begins by governing himself before setting out to govern others, according to the wise old saying, "*Ching ke, hwa jin*," i.e. "First straighten yourself, then correct others." The Sage lets good alone and corrects the evils which are within his reach. Having got rid of Selfhood (the Ahankara of the Indian philosophy), he acts from unselfish motives, and so establishes a virtuous government.

## IV

## THE CAUSELESS

TAO is without limitation ; its depth is the source of whatsoever is.

It makes sharp things round, it brings order out of chaos, it obscures the brilliant, it is wholly without attachment.

I know not who gave it birth ; it is more ancient than God.

Tao is said to “make sharp things round.” By this expression we may, perhaps, understand its universal adaptability and persuasiveness, no less than the perfection of its processes. So in the expression, “*Hang tsun fang peen*,” i.e. “Always respect square-convenient,” we have the idea of making square things round by adapting our actions to the likes and dislikes of others, or, as we say, making room for others. The perfect man is symmetrical: he has no sharp points of contention, his adaptability is perfect, his intelligence is constructive, he brings cosmos out of chaos. In brilliance he is like the sun, which obscures the light of the stars, his radiance falling on all alike, for the wise man “has no predilections.” This virtue is in Tao, by which man is made perfect.

The philosophic scale of Laotze appears from the last stanza of this chapter and from other passages of his book to be as follows:—

Principle	.	Tao	} HEAVEN	} Cogniser, MAN.
Cause	.	God		
Effect	.	Creation	} EARTH	
Ultimate	.	Use		

## V

## THE VALUE OF NOTHING

NEITHER Heaven nor Earth has any predilections; they regard all persons and things as sacrificial images.

The wise man knows no distinctions; he beholds all men as things made for holy uses.

The celestial space is like unto bellows—though containing nothing that is solid, it



does not at any time collapse; and the more it is set in motion, the more does it produce.

The inflated man, however, is soon exhausted.

Than self-restraint there is nothing better.

---

The perfect impartiality of Heaven in its dispensations to mankind has often been the subject of discussion, of deep thought with the learned and devout, of unbelief and scoffing with the ignorant. The operations of Nature are equally impartial; but this being evident and overwhelming to the senses, it cannot be mocked at nor denied. The ignorant are concerned with effects, the wise have more regard to causes. The Sun shines upon the just and the unjust with equal radiance, the soil responds in equal degree to the touch of the honest and dishonest worker. The same Nature supplies all their needs, the same Heaven overarches them. The wicked man equally with the good procreates and sustains his species. What is the reason of this? The Sage says, what we have elsewhere learned, that "God is no respecter of persons." Neither Heaven nor Earth have any regard to merit or demerit in the person, but both have a great regard for use. "Take what thou wilt, but pay the price," is the divine mandate, says Emerson. Therefore, if any man would sow, let him sow; and if any man would reap, let him reap. Heaven is the great husbandman and Earth the great granary. Every man will be paid in kind, according to the measure of his use. Thus the Sage, keeping close to God and Nature, regards all men as "vessels made to holy uses." The virtue of Heaven is its expansiveness, the virtue of man is his manhood. The Sage concerns himself with this, and keeps himself within proper limits.



## VI

## THE ORIGIN OF THINGS

LIKE the river in the valley, the spirit is never dried up.

I call it the Mother-Deep.

The motion of the Mother-Deep I regard as the origin of the Heaven and the Earth.

Forever it endures and moves without design.

---

The great flowing rivers of China would satisfy this simile of the inexhaustible nature of the Spirit, while others would not. The Mother-Deep is, as already shown, regarded by Laotze as a substantial Essence continually in a state of activity. Its modifications have produced every celestial and terrestrial object and creature. In this form it seems to correspond to the A'tmà of the Hindu philosophy, which by differentiation is the Mula-prakriti or Root-Substance of the universe, akin to the Protyle of Crookes, or the World-stuff of Clifford, but by no means to be confounded with them. Primordial substance is in all systems of cosmogony likened to deep water or the Ocean. Thus we have in the Hebrew scripture, "Ve-Ruach-Elohim merechepeth ol-peni he-mayim," *i.e.* "The Breath of Elohim fluttered upon the face of the Deep" (Vulg. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"). That this Mother-Substance is an eternal Essence is evident from the phrase, "Forever it endures." Being subject to the laws of its own nature, "It moves without design." That it

does so, does not preclude the idea of a co-ordinate Intelligence, of which its movements are expressive. That the whole activity of Nature is intelligible, probably intelligent, seems acceptable to the reason ; but it can hardly be said to be purposive. The purpose (not the purpose of our conception, but the inherent purpose) lies not in the activity nor in the mode of activity, but in the Intelligence which directs it to definite and preconceived ends. Such Intelligence must be a primordial correlate of Life and Substance, regarding these latter as synthetic of all modes of energy and all states of matter. Otherwise we should have blind force acting in blind matter, making of the intelligible Cosmos only a "fortuitous concurrence of atoms"—a concept long since abandoned by every honest thinker. And so because Intelligence and Purpose must be ascribed to the User of things rather than to the things used, Laotze says of this Mother-Substance, "It moves without design."

## VII

### HIDING THE LIGHT

BOTH Heaven and Earth endure a long time.

The cause of their endurance is their indifference to long life.

That is why they subsist.

Thus the wise man, indifferent to himself, is the greatest among men, and taking no care for himself, he is nevertheless preserved.

By being the most unselfish he is the most secure of all.

Regarded merely from the pathological point of view, this indifference to life being the probable cause of long life, would appear to be a fact in Nature. The familiar saying that care killed the cat—and cats have a reputation for being wonderfully tenacious of life—is intended to mean that constitutions which can withstand the attacks of disease and all the inconveniences due to exposure and privation will readily succumb to the effects of “carking care.” Of course, it may be also said that pleasure will kill as soon. But pleasure would never corrupt a man if he did not first corrupt pleasure. There is only one antidote for care, and that is carefulness. And because there is nothing more deadly than life the Sage secures himself by his indifference to it. Being indifferent to life, he is, nevertheless, careful of its uses, and so secures all the fruits of life without desiring them. Thus he is wholly free from care, and his old age is full of contentment.

## VIII

## THE EASY NATURE

THE greatest virtue is like water ; it is good to all things.

It attains the most inaccessible places without strife.

Therefore it is like Tao.

It has the virtue of adapting itself to its place.

It is virtuous like the heart by being deep.

It is virtuous like speech by being faithful.

It is virtuous like government in regulating.

It is virtuous like a servant in its ability.

It is virtuous like action by being in season.

And because it does not strive it has no enemies.

---

Laotze here wishes to say, and says in the most effectual manner, that the heart that is not deep, the speech that is not faithful, irregular government, a servant without ability, and action out of season, are without virtue. Principal among the qualities of water are its universality, its mollience, its adaptability, and its steadfastness or incompressibility. In this it is like the Tao, for while it accommodates itself to the dimensions and shape of every vessel, it is nevertheless steadfast and unyielding. It is at once the softest and the most irresistible of things. It flows of its own accord to the lowest places, yet is found in the most elevated. It is deeper than the deepest mine and higher than the loftiest mountain. It seeks the line of least resistance, and therefore it makes most progress. The virtue of Tao is manifold. The use of water is manifold. Nature cannot do without water, and Heaven cannot do without Tao. Man, who is related to both God and Nature, needs both water and Tao. This is the mystery of the saying, "Except ye be born of water and the Spirit, ye cannot be preserved."

## IX

## MAKING THINGS EQUAL

IT is advisable to refrain from continual reaching after wealth.

Continual handling and sharpening wears away the most durable thing.

If the house be full of jewels, who shall protect it ?

Wealth and glory bring care along with pride.

To stop when good work is done and honour advancing is the way of Heaven.

---

The Sage here advises us to leave well alone and give ourselves some rest. It is better to have a little and be able to hold it, than to have much and be in constant dread of losing it. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" For in spite of this age of shams, imitations, and appearances, the jewel is ever more to be considered than its setting. It is well to know when to stop in the getting of either wealth or fame. What is the use of acquiring overmuch of what we cannot hold for long? Every dead man will get his laurels. A live man has only to deserve them. And after all, as the immortal bard says, "He is well paid that is well satisfied." How often a fortune is lost by a man grasping at the last penny when he is sure of the pound! How often a good picture is spoiled by the last stroke of the brush! There is evident satisfaction in contentment and undoubted virtue in restraint.

## X

## WHAT IS POSSIBLE

By conserving the natural and spiritual powers it is possible to escape dissolution.

By restraining the passions and letting gentleness have sway it is possible to continue as a child.

By purging the mind of impurities it is possible to remain untainted.

By governing the people with love it is possible to remain unknown.

By continual use of the gates of Heaven it is possible to preserve them from rust.

By transparency on all sides it is possible to remain unrecognised.

To bring forth and preserve, to produce without possessing, to act without hope of reward, and to expand without waste, this is the supreme virtue.

---

Unfortunately the Sage does not give explicit instruction how to conserve the natural forces so as to escape dissolution,



but he certainly gives us some lucid hints both as to that and as to the preservation of the spiritual powers also. There is in the East a system of psycho-physical culture called Yoga (union, at onement), which aims at the unification of the natural and spiritual powers in man, by means of which it is said a man may retain his bodily and mental powers for an indefinitely long time. The great exponent of this system was Patanjali, whose work, the *Yoga Sutra*, or Philosophy of Atonement, is divided into two sections—"Hatha Yoga," or physical culture, and "Raj Yoga," mental culture. The purport of the work may be summed up in these few words: Regulate the breath, steady the mind, rid the heart of its desires, and enjoy peace. Whether Laotze is referring to any such system, it is difficult to say; but this we know, his body was full of vigour at ninety years of age, and his intellect commanded the esteem of no less a luminary than Confucius. But then, as he himself says, "the Sage gives without possessing." The lapse of twenty-four centuries has not diminished the light of his philosophy, which is only now beginning to be appreciated in the West. Laotze has surely escaped dissolution in the wider sense.

Probably the whole key to this conservation of the natural powers lies in the last stanza of this notable chapter. It is a fact that the systole and diastole movements of the brain (cerebrum) are synchronous and commensurate with those of the lungs. In some way living and breathing are more intimately related than is implied by ordinary comment, for not only is breathing the natural condition of living, but the *kind* of breathing denotes the habit of living. The slowest breathing animals are the longest lived. Moreover, the connection between breathing and thinking is not sufficiently recognised by the people. In anger a man breathes stertorously and quickly; in fear, he suspends breathing; in surprise, he catches his breath spasmodically; in profound thought, his respiration is slow and deep. Further, there is a measurable variation in the period and force of respiration when thinking of things of contrary natures, as black and white, high and low, pushing and pulling.

The breathing follows the thought. So by steadying the mind we steady the brain, regulate the breathing, and so control to a large extent the combustion of tissue in the body. It is possible to affect the mental processes by a reverse use of this method. As to which is the easier, or eventually more effective, whether to control the mind by means of the breathing or the breathing by means of the mind, is a matter that may be left to the consideration of physiologists and psychologists.

But Laotze makes the science of life to depend on virtue, *i.e.* use. It is, perhaps, better that a child should die in virtue than that a man should live a long time and not be in virtue. The one makes a natural use of its small powers, while the other has greater powers and yet cannot use them aright. To come to mature years without loss of virtue is what Laotze calls "expanding without waste."

## XI

### THE USE OF NOTHING

THE thirty spokes of a carriage wheel uniting at the nave are made useful by the hole in the centre, where nothing exists.

Vessels of moulded earth are useful by reason of their hollowness.

Doors and windows are useful by being cut out.

A house is useful because of its emptiness.

Existence, therefore, is like unto gain, but Non-Existence to use.



Laotze here teaches the value of self-effacement and obscurity—the virtue of humility. Having already called Heaven and Earth the “Existent,” and Tao the “Non-Existent,” he here shows their relationship. The Existent is the concrete thing, the Non-Existent the virtue of the thing by reason of which it exists. Thus a vessel of earth is fit to contain a something, but the containing is not a property of the vessel, such as is its material, coadherence, and form. Its containing is a virtue or use gained by its relationship to something else, namely, that which is contained; and since it has no use apart from its containing, that which is contained is what gives it a use, and by reason of which it is called into existence. So man, the Existent, is the vessel of earth, and Tao, the Non-Existent, is what gives him a use. If a man is full of vanities, how can Tao fill him? It is only a question of the *Fang peen* once more, *i.e.* “making room” for Tao by ridding the heart of its vanities.

## XII

## SHUTTING THE DOORS

LIGHT will blind a man, sound will make him deaf, taste will ruin his palate, the chase will make him wild, and precious things will tempt him.

Therefore does the wise man provide for the soul and not for the senses.

He ignores the one and takes the other with both hands.

The Sage here shows how the senses may be ruined by surfeit, and how faculties designed for use and the pleasures of use may be spoiled through excess. In the Bhagavad Gītā Krishna instructs Arjuna in the necessity of restraining the senses. He compares them to unbroken horses harnessed to the chariot or vehicle, *i.e.* the human body. The driver (*Manas*, the mind) controls the horses by means of the reins of Reason, and by the power of the Will finally masters them. Throughout this classic the Reason is opposed to the Senses and the Will opposed to the Passions. Indeed, there are grounds for believing that the Great War between the Kurus and Pandus is intended to depict only this strife between the Reason and Sense, or the Will and Desire, in man. Our author here takes the same line of instruction, and shows the futility of depending on the senses for our happiness and welfare. On the frieze of the Parthenon of Athens the same lesson was taught, as one may readily see if he examines it intelligently.

### XIII

## PREVENTING A FALL

HONOUR and shame are the same as fear.

Fortune and disaster are the same as the person.

What is said of honour and shame is this: shame is abasement, which is feared whether it be absent or present.

So dignity and shame are inseparable from the fear which both occasion.

What is said of fortune and disaster is this : fortune and disaster are things which befall the person.

So without personality how should I suffer disaster or the reverse ?

Therefore by the accident of good fortune a man may rule the world for a time.

But by virtue of love he may rule the world for ever.

---

Hatred, also, is akin to fear, for we only fear that which is inimical to our natures, and which therefore is the subject of our hatred. So because we fear disaster as threatening us continually, we dislike disaster ; and fear is the state of the person who is in danger of honour or dishonour, good fortune or shame. Certainly both honour and good fortune are a danger to us, in that we are continually in fear of losing them, which is worse than never having had them at all. To rid ourselves of the sense of attachment is to free ourselves from the fears incidental to personality. Fame and fortune are things which appertain to earthly rulership, while love is that which belongs to the government of Heaven.

## XIV

## PRAISING THE VOID

IE. Plainness is that which cannot be seen by looking at it.

He. Stillness is that which cannot be heard by listening to it.

We. Rareness is that which cannot be felt by handling it.

These, being indiscernible, may be regarded as an unity—I H W, Tao.

It is not bright above nor dark beneath.

Infinite in operation, it is yet without name.

Issuing forth it enters into Itself.

This is the appearance of the Non-Apparent, the form of the Non-Existent.

This is the unfathomable mystery.

Going before, its face is not seen ; following after, its back is not observed.

Yet to regulate one's life by the ancient knowledge of Tao is to have found the path.

That which appertains to the Absolute must necessarily be in terms of the *Ta-~~po~~* (not that), and the attributes of the Tao are therefore put in the negative. This method is followed by the Nâstika philosophers of India, who affirm the noumenal by negation of the phenomenal, as in the *Dwâdas'a Sloki* of S'ankarâchârya, which begins—

“*Na bhumir na toyam na tejo na vayur na kham  
Nendriyamvâ, na teshâm samuhah :  
Anekântikatwât sushuptyeka siddhah :  
Tadekovashishta' Siva kevaloham.*”

That is—

“I am neither the earth, water, luminosity, atmosphere, nor ether ; I am not the senses which cognise them, nor all these together,” etc.  
“ . . . I am that sole remaining imperishable Siva.”

Thus while refusing to define and limit Deity to the conceptions of the human mind, they content themselves by saying of whatsoever may be affirmed concerning it, “It is not that.” So with Tao, it is inclusive and summative of all known things and qualities, while not identified with any, nor defined by any known attributes. It cannot be seen, heard, felt, yet it is everywhere present. It is attributeless, non-apparent, and has therefore no name. It is the Unmanifest. It is also the Non-Existent, for “issuing forth, it enters into Itself.” Mr. Chalmers has taken the cryptogram, Ie, He, We, as identical with the Yod He Vau (I H W) of the Kabalistic name for Deity. It is here evidently a glyph for Tao. Time after time one suspects Laotze of having had access to some of the mystical writings of the West, and even to the Hebrew Scriptures, so closely does he voice phrases and ideas already familiar to our minds. Whether this be so or not we have no certain means of judging, though it is reasonable to suppose that as curator of the Royal Library he had access to every sort of book that had then found its way to China. It is hardly credible, however, that in the sixth century B.C. even the elements of the Kabala could have reached the Far East.

The words Path, Doctrine, and Tao are identical as applied to the subject of Laotze's book, and the reader may use whichever word seems to him most in accord with the spirit of the context.

## XV

## EXHIBITING VIRTUE

THE ancient wise men were skilful in their mysterious acquaintance with profundities.

They were fathomless in their depths; so profound, that I cannot bring them forth to my mind.

They were cautious, like one who crosses a swollen river.

They were reserved, like one who doubts his fellows.

They were watchful, like one who travels abroad.

They were retiring, like snow beneath the sun.

They were simple, like newly felled timber.

They were lowly, like the valley.

They were obscure, like muddy water.



May not a man take muddy water and make it clear by keeping still ?

May not a man take a dead thing and make it alive by continuous motion ?

Those who follow this Tao have no need of replenishing, and being devoid of all properties, they grow old without need of being filled.

---

To what order of "wise men" Laotze here refers it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty. It is well known that Tchang Ki and Yao and some others among the ancient rulers of China had the reputation of being men of exceeding goodness and wisdom. "Wise men of old," such as Seth and Enoch, who "walked with God," are frequently referred to in sacred and classic writings. At least fifteen centuries before the time of our author the Pyramid of Ghizeh was built under the direction of Khufu (Cheops) on the instruction, it is said, of one of the Hyksoi or Shepherd Kings. At even an earlier date a great civilisation was in progress in Egypt, and it is known that astronomical records were made in China as far back as B.C. 2448, as appears from the Shu King. There is, indeed, ample evidence to show that in very ancient times—ancient even from the standpoint of Laotze, who lived 2,500 years ago—it was possible for men to have passed through all the accidents of life in a high order of civilisation, and to have finally abandoned themselves to the getting of wisdom, having found that all else was "vanity and vexation of spirit," as did Solomon the King in his day. Reference is made in the Scriptures to the ingenuous and spontaneous nature of the ancient Sages—"Wise men of old spake as they were moved by the

Holy Spirit." There is no reason to suppose that all the wise men are included in Scripture history, nor that they were all crowded into the comparatively narrow geographical limits of the Hebrew records. China also had its patriarchs long before the Hia dynasty was established in the year B.C. 2205, and it seems probable that some of them were fully entitled to the name of Philosopher and Sage. Whoever they were, Laotze had sufficient knowledge of their wisdom to hold them in the very highest esteem. The phrase, "May not a man take a dead thing and make it alive by continuous motion?" appears to have reference to the ignition of sticks by friction, and other means of inducing activity in inert bodies.

## XVI

### GOING HOME

HAVING emptied yourself of everything, remain where you are.

All things spring forth into activity with one accord, and whither do we see them return?

After blossoming for a while, everything dies down to its root.

This going back to one's origin is called peace; it is the giving of oneself over to the inevitable.



This giving of oneself over to the inevitable is called preservation.

He who knows this preservation is called enlightened.

He who knows it not continues in misery.

He who knows this preservation is great of soul.

He who is great of soul is prevailing.

Prevailing, he is a king.

Being a king, he is celestial.

Being celestial, he is of Tao.

Being of Tao, he endures for ever; for though his body perish, yet he suffers no hurt.

---

This law of Change, this springing forth into activity and dying down to the root, is everywhere observable in Nature. Indeed, it is so apparent, so much in the nature of things, that it is a subject of marvel that the idea of death is yet unfamiliar to the human mind. Nowhere do we find humanity reconciled to the circumstance of death as to the inevitable, although it is a fact in Nature as certain as the rising of the Sun. Can it be the protest of the Soul, itself immortal, against association with a state so strange to it as death? Yet it is curious that, however long a man may live, the end always comes to him and to those around him as something awful, mysterious, and strange. Perhaps it is that we are too full of plans for to-morrow, too

full of unsatisfied ambitions and desires, that a sudden interference with our plans is a thing hard to accommodate.

Therefore the Sage says, "First of all empty yourself of everything, give yourself over to the inevitable, and go back Home in peace." Secondly, he says, "Having done this, you will be preserved, you will be enlightened, will be great of soul, a king, a celestial being, and finally will become at one with Tao." So in India they say that he who goes back to this condition of childlike simplicity, this condition of original purity, is Buddha (enlightened), Mahatma (great of soul), Rajarshi (king of wisdom), Mahadeva (a celestial being), and finally becomes at one with the Paramatma (the Universal Spirit), having attained Moksha, or liberation.

We prate a good deal about freewill, and continually find that what we claim for ourselves is not greater than that which may be claimed for others. What little we have is so insignificant, especially when we consider the ignorance which directs it and the gloom in which it is exercised, that we may as well give it over to God and enjoy His Omnipotence. It is universally observed that the higher a man's state of evolution, the greater is his respect for law. In this respect it may be said that the desire for freewill in the unit is akin to ignorance of cosmic and spiritual laws. Intelligence consists in the recognition of the law, and the desire to avail oneself of its operations. Ignorance, however, runs counter to the law at every turn, and but for the preservation of Heaven would speedily end in self-destruction.

## XVII

## BEING NATURAL

IN the first age of mankind the people recognised their superiors.

In the second age they served and flattered them.

In the third age they feared them.

In the fourth age they despised them.

Where faith is lacking it does not inspire confidence.

How careful they were in their expressions !

When they had done a good thing they would say, "How very natural we are !"

---

The Four Ages known to the Ancients, and passing current among all nations, were known as (1) the Golden Age, (2) the Silver Age, (3) the Copper Age, and (4) the Iron Age. The Sanscrit literature contains frequent mention of these Four Ages under the the following names : Satya, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali (Yugas). The first age was that of integrity, the second that of decline, the third that of good and evil, and the fourth that of darkness. These were again subdivided into lesser ages going by the same names. The Mahayugas, or Great Ages, had reference to cosmogenesis ; the Yugas, or

lesser ages, to human evolution and the history of the race. They are all astronomical periods, being based upon the motions of the heavenly bodies. Thus it has been shown that the sum of the Four Ages, amounting to 4,320,000 years, is the least common multiple of all the planetary periods ; that is to say, it is the time required for all the planets of the solar system to complete their revolutions and come to the same point of the Zodiac at the same time, and it has also been shown that the included periods or Ages are marked by the concourse of several planets in the same part of the heavens.

Laotze here shows the attitude of the people towards their rulers in the Four Ages, marking the deterioration of confidence between them. If the attitude of the world towards religious thought be considered in the same light, it will be seen that the statements are by no means inapt. The Sage further shows that the consciousness of doing good robs action of its pristine virtue. When good flows naturally from the heart there is no effort in doing good, and therefore no consciousness of merit. Our author is satirical in the last stanza of this chapter, but he need not have gone back to the fourth age to find an illustration. It is another instance of his inoffensive nature.

## XVIII

### PATCHING UP

WHEN the great Tao is lost men follow after charity and duty to one's neighbour.

When wisdom has met with honours the world is full of pretenders.

When family ties are severed then filial duty and parental indulgence take their place.

When a nation is filled with strife then do patriots flourish.

---

This is a notable chapter. It is evident that Laotze's book was written after the enunciation of the Confucian doctrine of Charity and Duty, and at a time when that doctrine had attained sufficient recognition and popularity as to be worthy of notice. This agrees well with the data at our disposal. Confucius is said to have propounded his doctrine about the year B.C. 520, when he was thirty years of age. He travelled through the principalities of China exhorting the people to cease from their intestinal wars and to return to the unity of the Empire. In B.C. 517 Confucius visited Laotze, as already stated in the Introduction hereto. It was after his eighty-seventh year, which would fall in B.C. 517, that Laotze retired from life in the service of the State and betook himself to the mountains. It follows, therefore, that the *Tao-teh-king* was written soon after B.C. 517, if not in that year. In this chapter Laotze refers to the doctrines of Confucius as a system of "patching up" of that which is already worn out. The so-called virtue of Charity and Duty to one's neighbour, the recognition of wisdom and learning by marks of merit, filial duty, and parental indulgence, are all regarded by the Old Philosopher as so many marks of degeneracy in the people. Against them he sets the natural virtue of integrity, and to this he would have us revert. The marks of integrity are summed up in these two words: God and Nature, godliness and naturalness, Tao and Teh.

## XIX

## REVERTING TO NATURE

By giving up their self-righteousness and abandoning their wisdom the people would be immensely improved.

Forsaking Charity and Duty to the neighbour, they might revert to their natural relations.

Abandoning excellence and foregoing gain, the people would have no more thieves.

The cultivation of these three things has been a failure, therefore should they go back whence they came.

As for you, do you come forth in your natural simplicity, lay hold on verities, restrain selfishness, and rid yourself of ambition.

---

The subject of the last chapter is here continued. The Sage advises us to abandon all this effort for worldly esteem and honour, and to revert to our first estate, to simplicity, truth, unselfishness, and contentment. Having been born of water (Nature) and the Spirit (God), we are regenerated and "become as little children." There is now no longer any effort in our lives. We know nothing of duty, but we are masters

of virtue ; we make no effort, but we accomplish all that is necessary ; we do not seek gain, but Nature provides for us ; we do not excel, but the whole world revolves upon us. Our very weakness is a tower of strength. If we are assailed, all the world rushes to our help. Our simplicity is greater than the wisdom of the Schools. If we speak, no man suspects us of an evil motive. Even Death cannot reach us, for we are already "of the kingdom of Heaven." Evidently, there is great virtue in this "Original Simplicity" of which the Old Philosopher speaks.

## XX

## HOLDING ALOOF

DISPENSE with your learning and save yourselves anxiety ; the difference between certainly and perhaps is not much after all.

Do they help us to distinguish between good and evil ? for one must always be careful of distinctions !

Alas ! but the people will never be free from their folly.

They are filled with ambition, as the stallion ox is filled with lust.

I am singular in my bashfulness, I am devoid of ambition, I am undeveloped as a little child.



I am but a waif, a stray, a child without a home.

All others have an excess of good things, but I am as one abandoned.

How foolish and simple am I! I am bewildered.

Everyone sparkles with intelligence, I am alone in my obscurity.

The people are full of discernment; I alone am dull.

I am tossed about like the ocean; I roll and am never at rest.

Everyone has something to do; I alone am incapable and without merit.

I alone am estranged from the people, but I glory on the breast of my mother!

---

After satirising the so-called wisdom of the Schools, which mainly consists in discriminating between "this" and "that" (or, as they have it in the Chinese, "ready assent" and "reluctant assent," the affirmative *wei* and the tentative *o*), always regarding differences as of more importance than similarities, and for ever discussing the branches instead of going to the root, our author pretends to lament his own incapacity and obscurity in order that he may say this one thing of himself which is true—"I glory on the breast of my



mother." He compares himself to a little child, abandoned and rejected by mankind, but dear to his mother—Nature. It is a full indictment of the world, and loses nothing of its force by reason of its simplicity ; for how can we reject the child of Nature without spurning Nature herself, on whose pure breast he lies in his glory? All this worldly wisdom of ours, this distinction of good and evil, this ambition, egoism, dogmatism, this patriotism, this spacing out of our lives into codes of ethic and polity, this ticketing and labelling of things and persons which characterises the world to-day, all this is laughed at and scorned by Laotze as something paltry, ridiculous, and unnatural. Yet while rejecting Nature in the highest sense, we swarm over her like parasites in all that appertains to the merely earthly. We are for ever probing her for new and ever new resources, prodding her for more and more sustenance, nosing and pushing and squealing like a litter of young pigs, and sucking at her like vampires. We know a great deal about her operations and resources, all that concerns the mere externals of her existence, but of Nature herself—her integrity, her virtue, her unselfishness, her close union with God—we are altogether ignorant, or what (but for our ignorance) would be worse, indifferent.

## XXI

## THE EMPTY SOURCE

THE greatest virtue is in simply following Tao, the intangible, inscrutable.

Inscrutable, intangible, and yet containing forms.

Intangible, inscrutable, and yet containing things.

Profound and obscure, but having an essence, a veritable essence in which is consistency.

From eternity until now its nature has remained unchanged.

It inheres in all things from their beginnings.

How do I know of the origin of things?

I know by Tao.

---

The properties of the Tao are here recited, and it is referred to as a veritable, consistent, and unchangeable essence, which is the root and origin of all things whatsoever. Elsewhere the Tao appears from the context to mean the *doctrine* concerning the nature of this essence, as in the phrase, "When the Great Tao is lost," etc. In this chapter we learn for the first time that Laotze is not speaking from traditional knowledge of the Tao, but from personal cognition of the doctrine, by means of which he can discern the origin and nature of things. "I know by (means of) Tao," he says. If the knowledge of Tao is consequent upon reverting to one's original simplicity and abandoning all that the world holds in esteem, Laotze may be said to have attained it. We see the Old Philosopher, close upon ninety years of age, leaving behind him the patronage of an Emperor, the favours of princes, and the esteem of the greatest minds of his age, toiling up the mountain-side to the Kwan Yin Pass, where he writes a small book on the nature of the True Path, which he commits to the care of a military out-

post. There were not so many pages as the writer had years, but such as it was, he left it to the world, and the world has held it for twenty-four centuries, seeming to know all along that it had something good to take care of and to pass on to posterity. And this that we have before us is that book: profound, yet most simple; perplexing, yet self-evident. As he elsewhere defines the anomalies and paradoxes of nature, so many will regard his book—"the open door of bewilderment." It is worthy of observation that both Lao-tze and Krishna committed very similar doctrines each to the care of a soldier. Having propounded the doctrine of Simplicity, Lao-tze "went Home"; and if we may judge the man from his book, he had not far to travel.

## XXII

## INCREASING THE SMALL

WHOSOEVER adapteth himself shall be preserved to the end.

Whosoever bendeth himself shall be straightened.

Whosoever emptieth himself shall be filled.

Whosoever weareth himself away shall be renewed.

Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.

Therefore doth the Sage cling to simplicity, and is an example to all men.

He is not ostentatious, and therefore he shines.

He is not egotistic, and therefore he is praised.

He is not vain, and therefore he is esteemed.

He is not haughty, and therefore he is honoured.

And because he does not compete with others, no man is his enemy.

The ancient maxim, "Whosoever adapteth himself shall be preserved to the end," verily it is no idle saying.

Without doubt he shall go back to his Home in peace.

---

The phrasing of this chapter is so like the text of the Christian scripture as to be remarkable in that respect alone. Thus we have in the teaching of the holy Nazarene this phrase, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," spoken by the Christ when exhorting His disciples to observe humility. Five centuries before this, Laotze in China and Siddharta Gautama in India were teaching the same doctrine in the same words. The Spirit of Truth, speaking through the ages, has in different climes spoken in various tongues, finding voice here in the Hebrew, there in the Hindu, now in the Arab, and again in

the Chinaman ; and in all we see "diversity of gifts, but the same spirit." There is every reason to think that, from a merely physical point of view, the adaptability of Nature is the cause of its endurance. The idea is, perhaps, contained in the scientific postulate of the Correlation of Forces. Nature effects her operations with the least possible output of energy ; it seeks the line of least resistance, as we see from the flowing of the rivers, the zigzag of the lightning flash, and the ellipsis of a planetary orbit ; it converts its forces by modulation from one character to another ; it uses up all its waste material ; it is never in a hurry. This is the Conservation of Energy which science demonstrates. Yet while most economical, it is most lavish ; although gentle, it is terrific ; and although it is irresistible, it adapts itself to every occasion. Because of this infinite capacity to adapt itself, it endures for ever.

## XXIII

## NON-IDENTIFICATION

MODERATE your speech, and preserve yourself.

A hurricane will not outlast the morning,  
a heavy rain will not outlast the day.

Who have the power to make these things  
but Heaven and Earth ?

And if Heaven and Earth cannot continue  
them long, how shall a man do so ?

If a man accords with Tao in all things, he  
is identified with Tao by that agreement.

A virtuous man is identified with virtue, a vicious man is identified with vice.

Whoever is identified with Tao, him do the Taoists receive with gladness.

Whoever is identified with virtue, him do the virtuous receive with gladness.

But whoever is identified with vice, him do the vicious gladly serve with vice.

For wherever confidence is lacking, it is not met with trust.

---

Moderation of desire and ambition is an essential to happiness, as Laotze has already shown; but perfection is not reached without gentleness and corresponding moderation of both feeling and action and speech. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay," said the Master, "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." Laotze considers immoderate speech as so much waste of energy. If we are to follow Tao, we must accord with it in all things—in speech as well as in thought, in feeling as well as in action. "Heaven and Earth," he says, "are not excessive, though having the power to produce hurricanes and torrential rains, so why should a man waste his energies in immoderate language?" We may conclude from this that suavity and gentleness and courtesy are qualities to be looked for in the Sage.



## XXIV

## UNDESIRABLE HONOURS

By standing on tiptoe one cannot keep still.  
Astride of one's fellow one cannot progress.  
By displaying oneself one does not shine.  
By self-approbation one is not esteemed.  
In self-praise there is no merit.  
He who exalts himself does not stand high.  
Such things are to Tao what refuse and excreta are to the body.  
They are everywhere detested.  
Therefore the man of Tao will not abide with them.

---

The Sage has a supreme disregard for non-essentials. Worldly power, fame, advancement, titles, vanity, self-esteem, and dependence on the strength or merits of others are condemned by him as undesirable honours, not essential to true happiness and welfare. He perceives that they are related to the externals of life, and are, in fact, the products of a corrupt civilisation, and therefore to be shunned as offal or excrement. The difference between deserving and desiring the esteem of the world is of importance. The man of virtue will so act as to deserve merit, but this he will do because the whole virtue of life consists in use, and not because of any desire for merit. He cares only to



fulfil his natural part in life, and to live without strife. If he gains merit, he will know how to wear it with modesty, but it will not in any way affect his course of action, nor cause him to set a greater value on anything that he does. The man who is desirous of merit acts only within the lines which lead that way, and there is nothing spontaneous or altogether virtuous in what he does. He is from the first attached to the fruits of action, and therefore if he fails to gain merit by his work, he is so much the more despondent and disappointed, and comes even to the point of regretting whatever good he may incidentally have performed.

## XXV

## APPREHENDING THE VOID

BEFORE Heaven and Earth existed there was in Nature a primordial substance.

It was serene, it was fathomless.

It was self-existent, it was homogeneous.

It was omnipresent, nor suffered any limitation.

It is to be regarded as the universal mother.

I do not know its name, but I call it Tao.

If forced to qualify it, I call it the boundless.

Being boundless, I call it the inconceivable.

Being inscrutable, I call it the inaccessible.

Being inaccessible, I call it the omnipresent.

Tao is supreme, Heaven is supreme, Earth is supreme, the King is supreme.

There are in the universe four kinds of supremacy, and their rulership is one.

Man is ruled by the Earth, the Earth is ruled by Heaven, Heaven is ruled by Tao, and Tao is ruled by itself.

---

From the point of view of the physicist this statement of the nature of the primordial essence, or First Matter, in the universe will, I think, come in the nature of a surprise. This concept of the Plenum has been referred to every philosopher in turn—to Newton, Kepler, Bruno, Ptolemy, and to Plato. It has been current in Europe ever since the days of the Neo-Platonists. In India it was of even more remote origin as a philosophic concept. Here we find it in China, where it appears to have been as well conceived of by Laotze as ever it was in the Western schools of thought. He says it was before Heaven and Earth. It therefore corresponds to *Ath-Ain-Suph* of the Hebrew cosmogenesis. Thus we have in the first of Genesis, *ath-hashemayim ve-ath-hearetz*, i.e. the original substance of the disposers (Heavens) and the original substance of the Earth. Laotze says it was without limitation and boundless. This is in agreement with the Hebrew expressions *tohu* and *bohu*, the formless and boundless substance out of which the cosmos was formed. Exactly the same idea is to be found in the Hindu philosophy, wherein the universe is conceived to be formed by differentiation from *Mulaprakriti*, the Root-

substance or Mother-substance of the infinite. Figuratively the universe is referred to as an egg (*Brahmandam*) floating in the ocean of space, while fluttering over it is seen the *Kalahansa*, or Bird of Time. The universe is frequently referred to as the *Auranyagarbha*, or Golden Egg. It is a matter of great interest to know that these deep problems were thought out in very ancient times, and that the conclusions of the old Sages were in no way discreditable to them from the point of view of pure philosophy, while it is undoubtedly the fact that they approached these subjects in a far more reverential spirit than do the thinkers of the West to-day. Their inspirations are only to be found in the sacred writings, by which circumstance they are saved all undue controversy, and, as Laotze elsewhere says, "The Tao which is the subject of discussion is not the true Tao (doctrine)."

Of the undulatory theory of light we have abundant evidence in both Sanskrit and Hebrew writings, and on many other points of the deepest significance it may be safely said that there is no conflict between revealed religion and true science.

## XXVI

### THE VIRTUE OF GRAVITY

WEIGHT underlies lightness, quiescence underlies motion.

Therefore the Sage never loses his gravity and quiescence from day to day.

Though glorious palaces should belong to him, he would dwell in them peacefully, without attachment.

Alas that a king with many chariots should conduct himself with frivolity in the midst of his kingdom !

By levity he loses his ministers, and by inconstancy his throne.

---

Laotze uses the Alternation theorem to its fullest extent. That weight underlies lightness is evident from the fact that we cannot speak of that which is light without supposing something that is heavy in comparison with it. Moreover, from general considerations of the nature of bodies and their gravities and positions, we are apt to think of that which is heaviest as being also the lowest, and that which is lightest as being also the highest ; and if left to themselves, things would be thus naturally arranged. Therefore, in common parlance, the earth is low and the heavens are high ; also that which is heaviest is most stable, while that which is lightest is most fugitive. So the Sage cultivates stability of character, that those who depend on him may rest in security.

That motion underlies quiescence is evident from the fact that we cannot think of motion apart from that which is moved ; and to think of it as moving, we must first suppose a position in which it is at rest, and from which it is dissociated by the act of moving. Also, from what we reason concerning the heavy and the light, there is an evident association of the heavy with the quiescent, and of the light with the fugitive. The Sage therefore cultivates gravity and restfulness while remaining joyous and active. This he does by the power of adaptation. Therefore all men respect him.

## XXVII

## THE USE OF SKILL

THE good walker makes no dust after him.

The good speaker incurs no discussion.

The good reckoner needs no arithmetic.

The good keeper needs no bolts or bars,  
and none can open after him.

The good binder needs no rope, and none  
can loose after him.

The wise man is a constant and good helper  
of his fellows. He rejects none.

He is a continual good preserver of things.  
He disdains nothing.

His intelligence is all-embracing.

Good men instruct one another; and bad  
men are the materials they delve in.

Whoever, therefore, does not honour his  
teacher and cherish his material, though he be  
called wise, is yet in a state of delusion.

This is no less important than strange.

The common incidents of everyday life are full of significance for the observant and thoughtful person. When the eyes and mouth are choked with the dust of other men's feet, the neat walker commands our esteem, and it is a pleasure to follow him. That is why it is more pleasant to follow the philosopher than the gun-carriage, and easier to walk after Nature than after a marching army. The good speaker incurs no discussion, because in the statement of his views he always leaves room for the opinions of others. The good reckoner needs no arithmetic, because he knows that the most abstruse calculation is after all only a matter of addition and subtraction, and that while there is only One, and that One is All, adding or taking away this or that is only a change in the order of things, not in their sum total. Therefore the Sage is concerned more with the sum total of things than with the items. The good keeper needs no bolts or bars, because he keeps nothing that he cannot give away, and his greatest treasure can neither be seen nor handled. He is the guardian of the Doctrine (Tao), and the key is within his own breast, so that none can open after him. Therefore the Sage lays up for himself "treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal." The Sage helps his fellows and preserves all things, because he uses them with skill.

Wisdom begets wisdom and folly instructs it. Therefore the Sage learns how to use even the apparently useless. We must, therefore, honour the Sage and cherish his material, bearing ourselves in compassion with all persons and things whatsoever.

## XXVIII

## BECOMING A CHILD

HE who, being a man, remains a woman, will become an universal channel.

As an universal channel the eternal virtue will never forsake him. He will re-become a child.

He who, being in the light, remains in obscurity, will become an universal model.

As an universal model the eternal virtue will not pass him by. He will go back to the all-perfect.

He who, being glorious, continues in humility, will become an universal valley.

As an universal valley the eternal virtue will fill him. He will revert to the first essence.

This first essence is that which, being differentiated, gives rise to innumerable vessels of life.

A wise man, by embracing it, becomes the wisest of governors.

A liberal government is that which neither disregards nor hurts anyone.



Laotze here shows that the Sage completes his nature and becomes symmetrical by developing simultaneously as man, woman, and child. He educates the strength of a man, the tenderness of a woman, and the simplicity of a child. Being filled with the Eternal Virtue, he shines with it. He does not shine against the Sun, but in obscurity, where shining is useful. He is glorious, not in the presence of kings, but among the people, who have need of his light. Having no will apart from Heaven, he governs all things, not with indifference, and not with tyranny, but as Heaven itself rules men—by love.

## XXIX

## NON-ACTION

WHEN a man who wishes to reform the world takes it in hand, I perceive that there will be no end to it!

Spiritual vessels are not fashioned in the world.

Whoever makes destroys; whoever grasps loses.

For perforce if one advances another is left behind; if one blows hot another will blow cold; if one be strengthened another will be weakened; if one be supported another will be undermined.

Therefore the Sage gives up all enthusiasm, levity, and pomp.

---

The reformer of the world is a plague and a pestilence, destroying things as they are and not staying to build up where he has destroyed. Let every man begin with his own conduct, and reform that; and when everyone succeeds, the world will need no further reformation. But if one cannot reform himself how shall he reform the world? There is something of madness in everyone, if not in the germ at least in tendency; but there is more than the usual predisposition to madness in the reformer. He sweeps into the horizon of our peaceful lives like a blazing comet, "brandishing his flaming tresses in the sky," and in his wake there are hordes of cadaverous ghouls and croaking vultures. Simeon and Levi—the political and religious reformers—"are a twin. Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Enter not into their counsel, O my Soul! Be thou not joined to their assembly. For in their vehemence they slew a man, and in their rashness they digged down a wall."

That "whoever makes destroys" is evident from the fact that there can be only one Maker of all things, and all human interference is only a process of pulling down in one place to set up in another. There is nothing gained in the process. So in the building up of Empires and Principalities. One may establish an Empire and destroy the unity of the Race, or build a Principality and destroy the integrity of the nation. That "he who grasps loses" is a corollary of the statement that "he who claims nothing as his own cannot at any time be said to lose." For if a man grasps an empire it is certain that sooner or later he will lose it. In view of our limitations and mortality it is better that we should regard God and Nature as already in possession and look to our stewardship. When this is done a temperate government is sure to follow, and the people will be cemented in goodwill to their rulers and to one another.

## XXX

## DECLINING FROM STRIFE

THE man who aids the King by the use of Tao forces the people into submission without resort to the use of arms. He will not regard the fruit of his actions.

Prickly briars and thorns flourish where battalions have quartered.

Bad years follow on the heels of armies in motion.

The good soldier is brave when occasion requires, but he does not risk himself for power.

Brave is he when occasion requires, but he does not oppress.

Brave is he when occasion requires, but he does not boast.

Brave is he when occasion requires, but he is not haughty.

Brave is he when occasion requires, but he is not mean.

Brave is he when occasion requires, but he does not rage.

Things become old through excess of vigour. This is called Non-Tao ; and what is Non-Tao is soon wasted !

---

There is no harm in forcing the people when violence is not used. By means of the Original Simplicity of Nature the people may be constrained through their own dispositions, and there is no violence done to any. It is always as easy to pull as to push. The great thing is to get along without undue effort.

No doubt this chapter was written for the special edification of the Guard of the Kwan-yin Pass, himself a soldier and a follower of the Tao. Perchance he had pondered on the seeming incongruity of his calling and the doctrine of life which he had espoused. Laotze reassures him. The situation is exactly similar to that of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gità. Therein we read that Krishna instructed the soldier upon the *dharma* (duty) of his station, showing that, whatever the calling, its merit lies in the faithful discharge of its obligations, "without regard to the fruit of action." The *dharma* of the warrior Arjuna and the *teh* (virtue) of the solitary picket of the Kwan-yin Pass are the same. Dharma is the special aptitude of all things born into the external world ; and hence it comes to mean "calling, duty," and eventually "merit." Laotze intends the same meaning in the use of the word *teh*. The merit of everything is in its use. Its use depends upon its nature. Therefore all merit and virtue are in the uses of things. Individual power is the measure of one's responsibility, and ability is the limit of obligation ; and it is a logical maxim that "virtue consists in being oneself," as our philosopher teaches.

After stating that war brings trouble and misfortune to the people, it is stated that the responsibility of such disasters does not rest upon the good soldier, who, although he be "brave when occasion requires," is clear of responsibility in the completion of his duty, so he be not oppressive, nor boastful, nor haughty, nor mean, nor wrathful, for by these qualities he identifies himself with the fruits of his actions, and incurs responsibility.

## XXXI

## CEASING FROM WAR

WEAPONS, however ornamental, are not a source of happiness, but are dreaded by all.

Therefore the man of Tao will not abide where such things are.

A respectable man at home sets the place of honour at his left hand; but the warrior on going forth to battle gives honour to the right hand. For weapons are things of ill omen, and the man of enlightenment does not use them except when he cannot help it.

His great desire is peace, and he does not take joy in conquest.

To joy in conquest is to joy in the loss of human life.

He who joys in bloodshed is not fit to govern the country.

When affairs are prosperous the left side is preferred, but when things are adverse the right is esteemed.

The adjutant-general is therefore on the left side, while the general-in-chief is on the right.

This I perceive is the manner also observed at a funeral!

He who has occasion to kill many people has cause for deep sorrow and tears.

Therefore a victorious army observes the order of a funeral.

---

The contrast between the Mongolian customs and those of the West has often been a subject of comment. Almost every action of a Chinaman is *gauche* from a Western point of view. In China the left hand is the fortunate one, and the right is the "sinister." This will make the saying of Laotze intelligible, for in times of peace, when the adjutant-general takes the command, the place of honour is on the left of the column or battalion, while in times of war, when the general-in-chief takes command, the place of honour is on the right.

The philosopher continues his teaching upon the uses of war, showing that there is no cause for exultation in victory, if such victory entails the shedding of human blood. Rather



is it a cause for sorrow, and the ancients recognised this when they disposed the victorious army after the manner of a funeral.

The recognition and use of the doctrine of Original Simplicity would make an end of war, and as to punitive expeditions, they too would cease. "Why should I take upon myself to punish the evildoer?" says the philosopher; "there is always the Great Executioner!" Let every man first be sure of his just rights, and then guard them; let him govern that which is his own and leave others to govern theirs. If a man shall sincerely take himself in hand, he will have little time to make war upon others; and with slender cause to find fault with them, he will not presume to correct them. This is what the Chinese philosopher calls "taking control." It is elsewhere referred to as "the little occupation," or "the small handful." But it is enough for one man, and will last him a lifetime.

## XXXII

## INTELLIGENT VIRTUE

TAO the absolute has no name.

But although insignificant in its original simplicity, the world does not presume to be-mean it.

If a king could lay hold on it, the world would of itself submit to him.

Heaven and Earth would conspire to nourish him.



The people without pressure would peacefully fall into their own places.

If he should dispose them by titles and names, he would be making a name for himself.

Yet he would wisely stop short of the name, and thus avoid the evil of distinctions.

Tao is to the world what the streams and valleys are to the great rivers and seas.

---

The virtue of all things lies in their natural qualities and uses, and not in the names that we give to them; and the scent of a rose is sweet, let us call it what we will. If haply we name things by their inherent qualities, we do to that extent observe harmony and display intelligence. Kings are distinguished by the virtue of their ruling; but those who are servile in character are by that reason unkingly, being dominated by their passions, by their courtiers, and by their people, who rise up against them. When a king rules by virtue "the people fall into their natural places."

If a man has a taste for titles, let him have many. It costs no more than a breath, and does not impoverish the country; and should he prove himself worthy of only one of them, everyone should be well satisfied. Yet *Tao*, to whom all offices are natural, and who fulfils everyone of them, remains without a name! Here the philosopher evidently intends the Supreme Being in essence and in manifestation, the Absolute, the Ineffable.

The Tao is compared to "streams and valleys," because it feeds and sustains the great waters, *i.e.* the people.

## XXXIII

## DISCERNING VIRTUE

HE is wise who knows others.

He who knows himself is enlightened.

He is strong who conquers others.

He who conquers himself is mighty.

He is rich who is well satisfied.

He walks fast who has an object.

He who fills his place remains secure.

He who dies without being corrupted enjoys a good old age.

---

The Old Philosopher, while allowing that the proper study for mankind is man, teaches a more excellent thing, namely, that a man should know himself, and be his own master ; for as we are more immediately concerned with our own work in the world than with that of others, so a knowledge of our individual selves is of greater use to us than a knowledge of others. It is, moreover, of more consequence to others that we should know ourselves than that we should seek to know them, for by self-knowledge alone are we enabled to rightly dispose ourselves in regard to others ; and then, if the knowledge of self should prove a difficult task, how next to impossible would be the task of knowing many others ! Self-conquest, too, is preferable to the conquest of others ; and if

every man began the work of reformation in himself, and brought his ambitions to an end there, the whole world would be simultaneously subdued and regulated.

"He is rich who is well satisfied," says the Sage. "He is well paid who is well satisfied," says Shakspeare. The root-cause of poverty is therefore discontent ; and if a man should desire more than his share, another must accordingly suffer privation. If a man's stomach is dissatisfied, it is likely that his brain or some other part of him will go on short commons. But a more conspicuous cause of poverty is waste, and Laotze concludes by saying that "what is not Tao is soon wasted." In full accord with this statement is the exhortation that we should "lay up for ourselves treasure in Heaven," and this is the only secure means of providing against eventual poverty. It is the Soul-thrift of the permanent man. To progress rapidly one must have a purpose in life ; and to be secure, one must so work as to defy competition. If a man fills his place in the spiritual and social economy, there can be no room there for others, and no danger of displacement will beset him, for there would be no rivalry. It is only when we strive to fill the places of others that overcrowding begins. Those who are troubled about the congestion of our great cities should regard the vacant spaces in the country. For the privilege of buying sixty-two per cent. of our comestibles abroad we produce enough smoke to fill an Inferno. If we must die, let us do so naturally, and not slowly asphyxiate ourselves.

The cause of death is corruption. If a man be corrupt, he is dead already, and in need of a resurrection. What we call putrefaction is only the evidence of an external death. The man of Tao does not die. He sleeps. Death kisses him, and makes him immortal on the instant.

## XXXIV

## THE PERFECT CONDITION

MIGHTY Tao is all-pervading.

It is simultaneously on this side and on that.

All living things subsist from it, and all are in its care.

It works, it finishes, and knows not the name of merit.

In love it nurtures all things, and claims no excellence therein.

It knows neither ambition nor desire.

It can be classed with the humblest of things.

All things finally revert to it, and it is not thereby increased.

It can be mentioned with the greatest of things.

Thus does the wise man continually refrain from self-distinction.

---

Laotze shows us how, by imitating Tao, we may attain to real greatness. Those works which are begun and finished by

us without regard to merit or the fruits of labour have in them the virtue of Tao, and may truly be called great, however lightly the world may esteem them. It is a fact, no less regrettable than obvious, that almost all the good work that is done in the world is the result of constraint. The fear of punishment or the hope of reward are the two walls of constraint which hedge the course of the great majority and compel them to do something good for the community. Fear of punishment restrains them from actual evils, and the hope of reward stimulates them to the performance of something which is, at all events, apparently good. But that which has the germ of Self in it is like pleasant-looking fruit that is rotten at the core. Every act is a child of life, and the motive is its soul. Self, separateness, discord, and destruction: these belong to the category of things evil. Unselfishness, unity, harmony, and preservation: these are things that are good. To do good for its own sake, out of goodness, is better than doing good for one's own sake out of expediency. The hope of Heaven and the fear of Hell have never yet produced a Saint, but both have helped to render the world full of hypocrisy and distrust.

## XXXV

## THE VIRTUE OF BOUNTY

ATTAIN to the Great Idea, and all the world will flock to you.

It will flock to you and will not be hurt therein, for it will rest in a wonderful peace.

Where there is a festival the wayfarer will stay.

To the palate the Tao is insipid and tasteless.  
In regarding it the eye is not impressed.  
In listening to it the ear is not filled.  
But in its uses it is inexhaustible.

---

The Great Idea is the Virtue of Tao, or Originality, Simplicity. To attain to this virtue is to cherish without distinction, to think without doubting, to speak without duplicity, and to act without attachment.

The natural abandon and unconstrainedness of a festival, where all are carried away by music and dancing into a spontaneous expression of their better natures, is here used by the philosopher to illustrate the attractiveness of the Tao. Yet he would warn us that the senses are not gratified by the virtue of Tao. Having already shown that the virtue of a thing is in its use—not in its form, however beautiful, and not in its material, however rare—he adds that in regard to mere usefulness the Tao is inexhaustible.

## XXXVI

## THE COVERT AGREEMENT

WHEN Nature is about to withhold a thing it is first sure to increase it.

When about to weaken it is first sure to strengthen.

When about to debase it is certain first to exalt.



When about to deprive it is first sure to give.

This is what I call the covert agreement.

The soft and the weak overcome the hard and the strong.

As a fish out of water is in danger, so a nation is in peril when its armaments are revealed to the people.

---

The law of Compensation, everywhere observable in Nature, has never failed to engage the minds of great thinkers, and it is conspicuously mentioned by Laotze. The correlated successive-ness of natural phenomena involves continual change in the relations of things, and it is only through change of state that the law of Compensation is free to work. That before a thing can begin to decrease it must first reach its fulness is a self-evident fact. If we are not content with this arrangement we are beyond the help of Nature. If it be asked why some enjoy a longer fulness than others, I would say that they are more ponderable bodies and move in larger orbits. This, also, is a matter of compensation, if we could but perceive it. They have had their long winter of privation. It is right that they should enjoy a long perihelion splendour. The point of attraction, the focus around which they revolve, may be centred in some hell of human passion, but that is their sun, and they shine by its lurid light. Others have their focus in higher atmospheres and regions far removed from Earth. And Heaven takes count of the whole circle of events and persons and things, not any separate phase of the world, nor any part of its orbit.

That "the soft and the weak overcome the hard and the strong" is evident from the facts of Nature. Water is yielding



and soft, but it wears away the rocks. Love is gentle and yielding, but it overcomes Self, which is a very hard thing.

By this "covert agreement" between Nature and Man we are assured that we have only to empty ourselves of things appertaining to self in order to be filled with love for others. "Blessed are the empty, for they shall be filled," says the Sage. It is better to reserve one's strength than to make undue display of it; for those who glory in their strength are apt to make occasion for testing it. The forces of Nature are great, but they become exhausted. Why, then, should man make haste to confess his inferior powers?

## XXXVII

## THE ART OF GOVERNMENT

TAO remains quiescent, and yet leaves nothing undone.

If a ruler or a king could hold it, all things would of their own accord assume the desired shape.

If in the process of transformation desire should arise, I would check it by the ineffable simplicity.

The ineffable simplicity would bring about an absence of desire, and rest would come back again.

Thus the world would regenerate itself.

"The Heart of Being is celestial rest," says the Buddha, and Laotze says, "What is celestial is by nature Tao"; and in the twenty-first chapter of this book he says of Tao, "From eternity till now its nature has remained unchanged!" Therefore in effecting things while remaining quiescent, Tao acts by non-action. By this paradox, "acting by non-action," we are to understand the doing of a thing without regard to its results, from a sense of non-attachment to the fruits of action, *i.e.* acting without design, spontaneously, as by nature. Thus water flows without desiring it, and without regard to the result of its flowing. Laotze says, "As the wind bloweth whithersoever it listeth, so let virtue establish itself." The Christ spoke to the same effect when He said, "The wind bloweth whithersoever it listeth, and no man knoweth the way thereof. It is even so with the Spirit." Therefore it appears that non-action consists in "working without design," by the natural expression of one's own qualities and talents when freed from all selfish motives.

### XXXVIII

## OF VIRTUE

THE superior virtue is not recognised as such, and it is therefore the very essence of virtue.

The inferior virtue has the distinction of virtue, and therefore it lacks the essence.

The superior virtue is spontaneous, and makes no claim to merit.

The inferior virtue is designing, and lays claim to recognition.

The higher benevolence acts without pretension to merit.

The inferior justice acts, and also makes pretensions.

The inferior expediency is designing, and therefore no one honours it.

Therefore does it bare its arm and assert itself by force.

Thus it transpires that when virtue is lost, benevolence takes its place.

When benevolence is lost, justice ensues.

When justice is lost, then expediency follows.

But expediency is the mere shadow of what is right and true, and is portentous of confusion.

Superficial virtue is the mere tinsel of 'Tao, and the fool makes use of it.

But the truly great man establishes himself on that which is solid, and will not lean upon a shadow.

He keeps to the real, and avoids display.

He rejects the one, and takes the other with both hands.

The philosopher here teaches that whatever is recognised as virtuous is not essentially so. This dictum is at first difficult to accept; but when one comes to think of it seriously and deeply, it glimmers in our consciousness as a point of intelligence, and then blazes forth as a magnificent truth! For if we speak of a man as godly or kingly, we tacitly infer that there is a distinction between God and the man who is like unto a god, between the king and he who is like the king. And because a semblance is not an identity, we thereby affirm only a similarity to the real thing, a mere vestige of the true. So that which we call virtuous is by that distinction separate from virtue itself. We speak of benevolence as humane, thereby recognising it as accidental to humanity, and not an essential virtue. We say of a monkey, "How very human it is!" meaning that although not a human, it is very like one.

This, then, is what Laotze means when he says, "The inferior virtue has the distinction of virtue, and therefore it lacks the essence," a statement which is something more than a mere sophistry. In this chapter the Old Philosopher shows the gradual decadence of virtue, bringing it down from the essential virtue of Tao to the modern shadow of virtue which is named "Expediency." This he rightly says is never mistaken for virtue by the wise, and it is not honoured as such. "Therefore it bares its arms and asserts itself by force." The modern expedient of "enforcing the law" is a fair example of the Shadow of Virtue. But men have grown to be so timid in themselves, so frightened of one another, that they are easily frightened by shadows. When a man is not himself genuine, shadows become to him what real things are to the wise and virtuous.

## XXXIX

## TRACING THE SOURCE

CERTAIN things have, by unity, lasted from most ancient times, namely :—

The transparency of Heaven ;

The steadfastness of Earth ;

The incorporeality of spirits ;

The watery plenitude of valleys ;

The life of all creations ;

The government of kings and princes ;

All these endure by unity.

But for the cause of its transparency Heaven would be in danger of obscuration.

But for the cause of its steadfastness the Earth would be in danger of disintegration.

But for the cause of their incorporeality spirits would be in danger of decease.

But for the cause of their plenitude the valleys would be in danger of sterility.

But for the cause of their vitality all creations would be in danger of destruction.

But for the cause of their honour and greatness princes and kings would be in danger of an overthrow.

Herein we see how honour is derived from that which is without distinction; and how greatness rests upon, and is sustained by, that which is insignificant.

Hence do princes and kings call themselves "orphans," "solitary men," and "chariots without wheels."

Do they not thereby acknowledge their authority to be vested in, and supported by, their superiors?

Who can deny it?

Surely "a chariot without wheels" is no chariot at all!

It is as hard for a man to be isolated like a single gem as to be lost in the crowd like a common pebble.

---

Having shown that Tao, the source of all virtue, is unrecognised and without distinction, Laotze now indicates how the virtue of all things is sustained by their unity, which is the essential attribute of Tao. Things endure by reason of their unity, or rather by reason of their unitedness. That



which is harmonious and which blends in unison has in it the elements of endurance. But that which is separate and in discord is doomed to destruction by that very disagreement of its elements.

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

The philosopher further shows that things derive their virtue from that which supports and sustains them. Thus a king is king by reason of his being the chief subject. While the people are in accord with him and with one another, he governs. For if the people are divided among themselves he cannot be said to govern them, and if the people do not acknowledge the king, it is only because he does not govern himself. If a man cannot govern himself he certainly can never govern others. As the head rests upon the body and governs it, being at the same time nourished and sustained by the body, so the king rests upon the people.

All things are sustained and nourished by Tao, the unrecognised and inconspicuous, and therefore whatsoever is distinguished from Tao is by that circumstance rendered liable to destruction on account of non-unity. Wherefore a king should not be separate from his people, but should regard himself as the chief subject. If he can govern that, he will have no trouble with the rest.

The teaching of the *Gità* on this subject is curiously similar to the teaching of our author, and the same simile is employed, the nation being compared to a chariot, the integrity of which does not rest in any one part of its constitution, but in all its parts working together. What holds them together are the insignificant pieces which generally escape notice. That which holds the universe together is the virtue of unity in Tao.



## XL

## RESIGNING WORK

THE path of Tao is backward.

The characteristic of Tao is gentleness.

Everything in the universe comes from existence, and existence from non-existence.

---

This, the shortest chapter of all written by the Philosopher, is well named by the commentators. Two of the three stanzas have been reiterated time after time in the course of this work. "The course of Tao is retrograde." This is a perplexing and seemingly paradoxical statement.

We have already seen that "all things die down to their root." But Tao has no root, and therefore it cannot be said of Tao that it dies down, for it is in itself the root of everything, and all things finally go back to it.

In what way, then, is the Path of Tao "retrograde"? In this wise: Tao itself, being boundless and immovable, cannot at any time be said to progress or retrogress. The Absolute has no procedure. When we speak of the Path or Way of Tao, we mean that course of human life and thought which leads to Tao. This path, from the point of view of embodied humanity, is retrograde. It is opposed to the course of human polity, it is contrary to the trend of civilisation. He who takes to this Path of Tao must go back whence he came; he must revert to his original simplicity and re-become a little child. All the great world teachers have cried out upon the corruptions of so-called civilisation. They have shown the incompatibility of the Path of Virtue and the "way of the world," and they have

laid down in no uncertain words the only means of attaining the Simple Life.

To quote only so much as may be received upon the authority of Scripture, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." The simplicity, candour, disinterestedness, and faith of childhood are incompatible with the polity of nations ; and there is no condition in the civilised world to-day wherein the precepts of the Nazarene could be attempted with any measure of success. The Path of Tao leads backward against the order of what is known as social progress. It leads in the direction of simplicity of life, not towards complexity and elaboration. The standards of respectability, of social importance, of commercial stability and professional status, are as false as they are difficult to attain, or when reached, to maintain. The standard of true virtue, of the simple life, is so easy of attainment that one has only to let go and he will fall into it naturally and without effort. The difficulty is in letting go, so electrified is the world by the idea of possession.

"Having emptied yourself of everything," says our author, "remain where you are." This is called "going Home" ; and, as we have seen, the path we have to take is that which leads backward. This is the Path of Tao.

## XLI

### LIKE AND UNLIKE

WHEN a wise man hears the Tao, he follows it.

When one of average mind hears it, he holds to it a while and presently loses it.

When a foolish man hears it, he only laughs at it.

If it were not held in derision by such men, it could not rightly be called Tao.

Therefore, as the verse-makers would say:—

Who shines with Tao is lost in shade ;  
His path in Tao is retrograde,  
And all his actions are obscure.  
The highest virtue has no name,  
The greatest pureness seems but shame ;  
True wisdom seems the least secure.  
Inherent goodness seems most strange ;  
What most endures is changeless Change ;  
And squareness doth no angles make.  
The largest vessel none can gird ;  
The loudest voice was never heard ;  
The greatest thing no form doth take.

For Tao is hidden, and it has no name ; but it is good at beginning and finishing.

---

The author here shows the different moods in which the doctrine is received by men of various degrees of intelligence. Only the truly wise, the pure-hearted, hear the doctrine and hold to it. To be esteemed by the wise and scorned by the foolish and worldly is the guarantee of real worth. The parable of the Sower (Mark iv. 14-20) is in support of this observation of our author.

In this chapter Laotze falls into verse after the manner of

other Chinese writers of that period. The *Shi-king* comprises all the ancient poetry of China. Originally it contained 311 odes, selected by Confucius out of some 3,000, but six of them have since been lost. The lines consist mostly of four words, and there are 7,374 lines, or about 29,500 words in the *Shi-king*. In this example of the verse of that period, Laotze says that true virtue shines in obscurity, *i.e.* where it is most needed; that the virtuous man "goes back to his Home in peace," and observes self-restraint and humility. The highest virtue, being a property of Tao, is not recognised as virtue, and therefore has no name, while that which was natural to the pristine purity of the race is recognised as shameful because of the perverted nature of men's minds; and in the same manner true wisdom is not relied upon for guidance, nor does it meet with any recognition in the world. "Inherent goodness" seems strange indeed to a condition of society which is honeycombed with deceits and subterfuges, veneered with shams and ostentations, and wholly given over to selfishness, greed of gain, false standards of respectability, and prurient corruption. In the midst of all this shuffling of life's kaleidoscope, the broken pieces of coloured glass are made to fall into new and ever beautiful forms of symmetry, so that the world is always new and attractive, and always false and delusive!

All things will pass, this is a world of Change;  
Nothing endures, but caught on Life's great wheel,  
Old worlds evane, and stars both new and strange  
Ascend the heaven of Time for good or ill.

But as Laotze here reminds us, Tao is "good at beginning and finishing." That which begins and finishes is the cause of existence. "Everything in the universe comes from Existence," he says, "and Existence from Non-Existence." The Non-Existent is the Deity. Whatever has existence must change and perish. Only the Non-Existent is imperishable and unchangeable, and to that which subsists, unchanged and imperishable, the eternal Life, Intelligence and Substance of

all existences, we give the name of Deity. We have therein great reason to bewail our limitations.

"That which was before Heaven and Earth is called the Non-Existent," and it is that which begins and finishes all existences, being "good" throughout. Indeed, if God be not good at beginning and finishing, who shall attempt the work? Good as Creator, good as Preserver, and good as Restorer; verily, God is good and great in all His works, and His name is ineffable!

## XLII

### THE CHANGES OF TAO

TAO emaned the One; the one emaned the Two; and the two emaned the Three.

From the Three all things have proceeded.

All things are backed by the Unmanifest and faced by the Manifest.

That which unites them is the immaterial breath.

Orphanage, isolation, and a chariot without wheels are shunned by the people; but kings and great men appropriate these names to themselves.

For things are increased by being deprived; and being added to they are diminished.

That which people teach by their actions I make use of to instruct them.

Those who are violent and headstrong, for example, do not die a natural death.

They teach a good lesson, and so I make use of them.

---

The Theogony of Taoism is simplicity itself, and by that virtue is characteristic of the whole doctrine. The One (Tao) emanated the Two (Heaven and Earth), and these two emanated the Three (Heaven, Earth, and Humanity).

By Heaven we understand all that is spiritual in its nature, and by Earth all that is material. Man, compounded of heavenly and earthly natures, is at once a spiritual involution and a natural evolution—spiritual as to his soul, and natural as to his body.

This is the ancient doctrine which preceded the Shintoism of the twelfth century B.C., and it appears to have been the sole religion of China under the successive rulers of the Patriarchal dynasty—Fuh-hi, Shin-nung, Hwang-ti, Shaou-haou, Chuen-hia, Ti-ko, Che, Yaou, and Shun. It remained in more or less of its natural purity through the succeeding dynasties of Hia and Shang, and was consistently taught as part of the ancient doctrine by the founders of the Chow dynasty, Wan-wang and Wu-wang. It was not until the times immediately prior to the birth of Laotze that a marked spiritual decadence was observable in China; and of this more will be said in the concluding part of the present work.

“That which unites them,” says Laotze, speaking of the Three Emanations, “is the immaterial Breath.” This term has a peculiar signification throughout the philosophies of the world, and its employment in this place is of great interest.

In the Indian philosophy we find the name *Brahma* given to



the Creator. It is derived from the root *brih*, "to expand," and from this we have the English verb "to breathe." The Hebrew words *ab* and *abba*, *i.e.* "father," have the same signification, while the Hebrew *bra*, "creation," is undoubtedly a cognate of the Sanskrit word *brih*. In the Genesis we have the expression, *Ruach Elohim merechapeth ol peni hamayim*, *i.e.* "the Breath of God fluttered upon the face of the waters." The Logos, Verbum, or Word, has the same connotation, and by the Word, Voice, or Breath of God all things were made. Conceivably this "breath" is a living, quickening force, working in the original essence of things to the production of forms of life. Those who are acquainted with the phenomena of sound-forms will understand more clearly than others how the "Voice of the Silence" underlies all manifestations of life.

Laotze is frequently reiterative, and in this chapter he again speaks of the "greatness of humility" and "the fulness of privation." It has already been noted (Chapter XXVII.) that foolishness instructs wisdom, and here we may note how the philosopher avails himself of such instruction for the service of others. In this there is a divine economy, which finds a use for that which is apparently useless.

### XLIII

## UNLIMITED USEFULNESS

THE gentlest thing in the world will override the strongest.

The Non - Existent pervades everything, though there be no inlet.

By this I comprehend how effectual is non-action.



To teach without words and to be useful without action, few among men are capable of this.

---

There is nothing gentler in the universe than God's love toward men. By that love all things whatsoever are sustained and nourished and preserved. No man, however strong or great, can so provide for the teeming life of even this our Earth, insignificant though it be in comparison with the amplitudes of space. The atmosphere, which enfolds and nourishes all forms of life with imperceptible gentleness, can on occasion gather its strength and go forth in irresistible power, uprooting trees, devastating cities, overturning towers and monuments, destroying bridges, wrecking ships, and dealing out death and destruction in all directions. It is not thus, however, that its greatest strength is shown, but in the gentle and silent work of sustaining life, wherein wealth and power and giant strength would prove wholly ineffectual. Nature teaches without words; Heaven is useful without action. The unnatural and ungodly do not attain to this perfection of virtue.

## XLIV

## STANDING STILL

WHICH is the nearer to you, your name or your person ?

Which is the more precious, your person or your wealth ?

Which is the greater evil, to gain or to lose ?

Great devotion requires great sacrifice.

Great wealth implies great loss.

He who is content can never be ruined.

He who stands still will never meet danger.

These are the people who endure.

---

“Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?” the Master enquired of His disciples in the same spirit that Laotze is moved to this catechism. Life is more than meat or raiment, and the body is more than name or reputation.

“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” If we are greatly devoted to worldly honours or to wealth, we must be prepared to make great sacrifices, for it is certain that sooner or later we shall be required to yield both honours and wealth. Wherefore, if one be content with his lot, and reconciled to all changes that may occur therein, he can never suffer by reversal of position nor by access of good fortune. And if the violent and headstrong are in danger of a violent death, they who stand still will escape such danger. Death is so certainly a consequence of life, that there is no need to go forward in haste to meet it.

Abandoning all attachment to the things of life, one becomes non-attached to life itself, and the ultimate cessation of life appears as no privation. The case is so obvious that one wonders at the persistent reiteration of the doctrine by the great teachers. The trouble is that the world remains unimpressed by their teaching.

## XLV

## INDEFINITE VIRTUE

HE who sees that his highest attainments are always incomplete may go on working indefinitely.

He who sees his greatest possessions to be inadequate may go on acquiring for ever.

His highest rectitude is but crookedness.

His greatest wisdom is but foolishness.

His sweetest eloquence is but stammering.

Action overcomes cold ; inaction overcomes heat.

With virtue and quietness one may conquer the world.

---

Human attainments at their very best are but comparative failures. They all fall short of perfection. With eternity before us we may go on eternally acquiring. What we know, in comparison with what is possibly knowable, is as a grain of sand in a desert. Sir Isaac Newton, in his last moments, spoke of himself as "a little child playing with the pebbles on the sea-shore," while the whole ocean of Truth lay wholly unexplored before him ! How thoroughly refreshing is this childlike humility which attaches to the really great mind !

When a man comes to this conclusion he is in the right frame of mind to begin learning.

The wise in all ages have recognised that individual freewill and responsibility, and therefore also individual merit, lie rather in the mental attitude that we assume towards the affairs of life than in the affairs themselves. Men are not the makers, but only the users of circumstance. Before a man can control the course of events in regard to himself he must first negative the effects of all antecedent causes, and then must be able to control his own attitude in regard to his own environment. For it is a logical axiom that character and environment make up human destiny. That being so, there is nothing left save that the mental attitude towards the affairs of life renders it possible for one to fulfil its duties, acquire wealth and position, attain honour and learning, without attachment; that is to say, without being involved in all the consequences of action.

This mental attitude is the means of discriminating between what is an essential and what an accidental of life. And when a man discerns his crookedness he is by that discernment assured of essential rectitude. When he sees his best attainments to be incomplete, he is by that perception rendered capable of perfectability. It is only when ignorance and wickedness are not recognised as such that they are so deeply perverting.

Laotze compares action with use or virtue (*te/h*) and stillness to self-restraint; and by means of these two, virtue and self-restraint, he says the world may be conquered. For since by these we may conquer the self, the world is simultaneously conquered. By self-conquest we are able to regulate our mental attitude towards all things and persons, controlling them by our own self-control. When the world finds it cannot dispose of a thing, it generally ends by using and esteeming it. That is why mankind is certain to come back to the simplicity of Nature, and Tao.

## XLVI

## CURBING DESIRE

WHEN Tao is in the world, horses are used in the pasture land.

When Tao has left the world, chargers are reared in the wilderness.

There is no greater sin than indulging desire.

There is no greater pain than discontent.

There is nothing more disastrous than the greed of gain.

Hence the satisfaction of contentment is an everlasting competence.

---

The universal utility of the horse in the arts of peace and war has led writers in all ages to make reference to it and to employ it as a symbol, sometimes to denote the passions of men when wild, wayward, and unbridled ; frequently indicating utility, the conspicuous quality of the horse when properly trained and harnessed ; and sometimes symbolising the spiritual condition of man. Latterly there has been a disposition among civilised nations to abandon the horse in favour of mechanical modes of draught and conveyance, steam-engines, tramcars driven by means of electricity, cable, and steam, oil and electric motor-cars and bicycles following one another in quick succession. The friend of man seemed in danger of an universal disparagement. But Nature laid hold of the passions of men to befriend the dumb animal, and worked a wonder in its own quiet way. It first brought the great planets together in the

sign of the Scorpion, gathering together all that it was able of the forces in the solar system, and bringing them into array against the great Dragon and the greed of gain it was held to signify. The Sun, the Moon, Uranus, Saturn, Mars, and Mercury answered to the call, and with these "stars in their courses" Nature stirred up in appropriate places the elements of greed, ambition, lust, and discord. And four years later (in December, 1899) all these occurers were brought together again in the sign of the Horseman, and the value of horses was nearly doubled! For when Tao leaves the world to its own resources, one may trust men of the world to put prices up all round! From this piece of astrological reasoning one may be led to consider whether, after all, Nature is not always and altogether on the side of peace and gentleness. Certainly when man begins to disparage Nature and the things which she has provided for his use, and when he goes about inventing new methods of living, stimulating old appetites by new sensations, then Nature begins to rouse herself and assert her ancient rights.

"There is no greater sin than indulging desire and no greater pain than discontent," says our author. Indulging desire under the pretext of redressing wrongs is a thing of daily happening. To put recent history very plainly, one may say, without much fear of contradiction, that if Armenia had possessed a reef or two of workable gold, a diamond mine, or anything of greater commercial value than Mount Ararat to call its own, its wrongs would long since have been avenged and even redressed. If the Transvaal had only its farm-produce on which to rely for its revenues, would Great Britain have spent one hundred and thirty millions sterling in overturning its corrupt Government? I do not pretend to understand these things, but I have noticed that no wrongs are so speedily redressed as those which are done to the rich and powerful. Yet I have seen the sorrows of a poor man assuaged and the sores of a Lazarus healed more quickly than those of a prince, which I consider to be a remarkable fact. But then, one was obviously nearer to the heart of Nature than the other.



## XLVII

## LOOKING ABROAD

A MAN may know the world without leaving his own home.

Through his windows he can see the supreme Tao.

The further afield he goes the less likely is he to find it.

Therefore the wise man knows without travelling, names things without seeing them, and accomplishes everything without action.

---

It may be that Laotze is here speaking in terms of human nature, indicating that self-knowledge will suffice for all worldly experience, and that Tao is to be found within oneself by means of introspection, and attained by contentment and non-action, as already indicated in preceding chapters. Or, on the other hand, he may be speaking in terms of supernormal perception, to which reference has been made in these commentaries in connection with the science of Yoga, which is the union of the human soul with the Divine Being, and of the body with Nature, the complete "at onement."

The belief in the possibility of attaining supernormal powers is everywhere current in the East, and in India the science by which these faculties (*siddhis*), presumably latent in all human beings, are brought into activity and under the control of the will is called Yoga, *i.e.* Union. The word is derived from the



root *yuj*, "to join," equivalent to the Latin *jugum*; and from the Sanskrit *yoga* we obtain the English word "yoke," to join together.

There are two chief aspects of this science, both of which have their advocates and adherents throughout India at the present day. The one is *Hathayoga*, which seeks to enlarge the mental faculties by control of the physical functions; and the other is called *Rājyoga*, and aims at the complete subjection of all the faculties by steadying the mind and directing it to the contemplation of spiritual subjects, and finally to God.

The former system proceeds by a number of religious austerities to acquire an indifference to pleasure and pain, which state is called *vairāgya*. It then seeks to obtain phenomenal control over the physical functions by means of the science of breathing (*swara*), and finally it emerges in the display of a number of phenomenal powers (*siddhis*), such as reversing the polarity of the body so as to produce levitation, suspending animation by control of the breath (*samādhi*), abstaining entirely from food, and having complete mastery of the physical functions. Such *Bairāgis* are turned out by India in swarms at all her great festivals, and form a truly pitiable and revolting spectacle.

*Rājyoga* proceeds by two chief means to the attainment of its objective, namely, by *vidya*, or knowledge, and by *bhakti*, or devotion, both being effected by religious and philosophical contemplation. To this, or a very similar school of practice, our author appears to have belonged. Among the religio-philosophical cults of the West, Gnosticism appears to have embraced a very similar system of thought and practice.

I suppose there is nothing better attested in the world than the existence, in certain individuals, of abnormal or super-normal faculties. The mere existence to-day of the common conjurer and the professional clairvoyant is *a priori* evidence of the past existence, in rare cases, of the genuine faculty. Pinchbeck would never have been invented had not gold been so highly esteemed. Scripture is abundant in recital of these

instances of supernormal faculty, and, indeed, it would appear that great teachers in all ages have made appeal to the minds of their followers by means of that most powerful of all evidence—the evidence of the senses. They did not, however, omit to characterise the witnesses at the same time as an ignorant, perverse, and faithless generation. For, after all, it will be seen that such evidence is not in any way a guarantee of the truth of a doctrine. If one should say that reasoning is of two kinds, deductive and inductive, that would not demonstrate the specific gravity of iron, or determine the ratio of the diameter of a circle to its circumference. And if one is able to perform what is called a “miracle”—a thing of wonder—he is not thereby entitled to claim more than an extraordinary knowledge of natural laws. It gives him no title to any degree of spiritual authority, and warning of this necessity for discernment is conveyed in the following words of Scripture: “For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Scientific statements require scientific proofs; mathematical statements require mathematical proofs; logical statements require logical proofs; and in the same manner spiritual statements can only be tested by spiritual standards and evidence. Whether our philosopher had, by spiritual exaltation or other means, attained to yogic powers there is no evidence to show; but from the last line of this chapter it is evident that he knew of the existence of such powers.

Whatever is the subject of reason is also the subject of doubt, for we only reason concerning that which is not obvious. Intuition, which may be called the higher sense of spiritual cognition, sees and knows by direct perception, and is altogether distinct in its operations from either the sense or reason.

But perhaps Laotze is speaking mystically, and means no more than this. By knowledge of Tao we know the essence of things; their externals are mere details. By knowledge of Tao we know the qualities of things; their names are simply adjuncts

for the purpose of distinction. By knowledge of Tao we produce results without further action, for having attained Tao we have effected everything. Learning is the perception of differences. Wisdom is the perception of similarities. The final statement of wisdom must be : *Omnia sunt unum in Deo*.

## XLVIII

## THE DISTRESS OF KNOWLEDGE

BODILY and mental distress is increased every day in the effort to get knowledge.

But this distress is daily diminished by the getting of Tao.

Do you continually curtail your effort till there be nothing of it left ?

By non-action there is nothing which cannot be effected.

A man might, without the least distress, undertake the government of the world.

But those who distress themselves about governing the world are not fit for it.

---

The quest of knowledge is indeed a distressful thing, and after all knowledge wholly consists in the perception of differences. There is, in the very nature of it, no possible end to the task ; and there is hence no satisfaction. Giordano Bruno says in his *Della Causa Principio ed Uno* ("Concerning the First and

only Cause"): "The omnipotence of Deity is better expressed in the production of an infinite variety of worlds of various dimensions than in the production of a single world of infinite dimensions." And if man's intelligence cannot grasp all things included in the life of this little world of ours, how can he hope to exhaust the infinite multitude of things comprised in the life of an apparently boundless universe of worlds? How can the finite comprehend the Infinite?

Laotze says that it may be done by a knowledge of the Tao. There are things which are hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. Tao is of this nature. The knowledge of it is compassed by Simplicity. If a man inflates himself with an incessant stuffing down of knowledge, what room is there left for Tao? Shall the world go on continually increasing its pace in the race for life? Must the struggle for existence become ever fiercer and sterner than of old? Or shall we not emerge suddenly, as by a great revulsion of feeling, from the heat and madness of the strife, starting at the whispered word, "*Where is Abel, thy brother?*" Enough! enough! Tell us the end of all this, ye pioneers of modern civilisation, and let us say whether we see any hope of attainment your way. If necessity be the whetstone of intelligence, it is certain that it can sharpen a sword or a guillotine as readily as a pruning-hook or a sickle! Let us be careful and respectfully cautious, for this intelligence of ours is a dangerous thing.

Withal, Laotze appears to be justified by the Spirit of Truth, for he is not alone among the teachers of the world who have foreseen the distress of knowledge and abuse of wealth. Another and a higher advocate of the doctrine of Simplicity said at a later date, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Laotze is true to the spirit of the ages also when he says of the kingdom of heaven, "The further a man goes in search of it, the less likely is he to find it." Here is his warrant and testimony: "If any man shall say, 'Lo here!' or 'Lo there!' believe him not. . . . The kingdom of heaven is within you."

## XLIX

## THE VIRTUE OF CONCESSION

THE wise man has no fixed opinions to call his own.

He accommodates himself to the minds of others.

I would return good for good ; I would also return good for evil.

Virtue is good.

I would meet trust with trust ; I would likewise meet suspicion with confidence.

Virtue is trustful.

The wise man lives in the world with modest restraint, and his heart goes out in sympathy to all men.

The people give him their confidence, and he regards them all as his children.

---

One has only to express ignorance of anything, and there are at once hundreds who are ready to inform him fully. Opinions are as numerous as the pebbles on the shore, and as various. They are also equally cheap ! It is the scarcity of things that



gives them their value and makes them greatly esteemed. That is why, in an enlightened age, simplicity is more esteemed than learning, and the humble are better served than kings.

Observe the restraint with which the learned approach their equals in knowledge. With what distrust they regard one another; how carefully they weigh their words; how they fence with one another for an advantage, and with what meagreness they exude their drops of learned nectar under pressure, as if one were abstracting milk from cheese! But they are otherwise in the presence of the child-like and simple-minded. These they gladly fill with gratuitous information, giving of their best in princely fashion! It is, therefore, better to empty oneself of all preconceptions, and become teachable and simple-minded. Why should one trouble to form opinions of one's own when all the world is ready to bring them to him ready made? And as so many are concerned in the making, so much the greater variety is there to choose from. And if men will not supply one's deficiency, perchance Nature will; for it is observed that she spends much time in filling up empty spaces, having a distaste for the vacuous. But if even Nature will not do it for one, then the Infinite Goodness must indeed compassion us; for it is said: "Blessed are the empty, for they shall be filled!" Perchance this were the better way, that one should be filled with goodness and virtue and the essentials of knowledge from the Source of Wisdom and Virtue, than that he should be filled through a variety of channels with knowledge in which there is no essential virtue.

Having nothing to call one's own, a man can give generously without incurring the risk of merit; he can trust all, since none can rob him; and he can return good for evil and lose nothing in the act. Why not give up to God and Nature what is already their own? We cannot deny the debt; why should we go about to increase it, making it ever more and more difficult to pay back and regain our freedom?

## L

## THE VALUE OF LIFE

MEN go forth from Life and enter into Death.

The Gates of Life are thirteen in number ;  
and the same are the Gates of Death.

By as many ways does Life pass quickly  
into Death. And wherefore ?

Because men strive only after the Sensuous  
Life.

It has been said that one who knows how  
to safeguard Life can go through the country  
without protection against the rhinoceros and  
tiger.

He may enter into battle without fear of  
the sword.

The rhinoceros finds no place wherein to  
drive his horn.

The tiger finds no place wherein to fix his  
claws.

The sword finds no place wherein to thrust  
itself.

Why is this ?

It is because he has overcome Death.



This chapter contains two allegories : that which concerns Life as the Gate of Death, and that which relates to Death as the Gate of Life. Lao-tze uses the symbol of Kwan-yin, the Mother of Humanity, Nature. The thirteen gates are the thirteen orifices of the female body. The Mystics divide them thus : The Higher Septenary, comprising the orifices of the head—the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils and the mouth. The Superior Natural Triad, comprising the two breasts and the navel. The Lower Natural Triad, comprising the two organs of excretion and the organ of generation.

By so many Gates mankind enters into the knowledge of earthly life, and "the same are the Gates of Death." St. Paul, in his luminous address to the Corinthians on the nature of the resurrection, shows that man is concerned in life and death with two bodies—"a natural body and a spiritual body." Of the natural body he says : "It is sown in corruption and dishonour." Of the spiritual body he says : "It is raised in glory and incorruption."

By the body of Nature we are born into Death, and by the body of the Spirit we are born into Life. For Life is the attribute of the Spirit, and Death is that of the body. Therefore our author says : "Men go forth from life and enter into death," and on the other hand he says of Tao : "It goes forth and enters into Itself!" It is incorruptible and unchangeable.

If one would safeguard life, it is first necessary that he should distinguish between the living and the dead ; and having given up that which is corrupt and full of dishonour, he will be able to lay hold on eternal verities and become a vessel of life infilled by the Eternal Spirit, which is the Tao, the Truth and the Life. The second parable employs the familiar illustrations of the East as related to the causes of death. The rhinoceros represents the selfishness of the pushful and thick-skinned individual who knows only his own desires and will have his own way even at the cost of suffering in others. The tiger symbolises the passions of man, the predatory stealth and watchfulness which is allied to bloodthirstiness and fierceness of spirit. The sword

denotes strife and dissension, the severing of ties that are natural to human life. When the Sage says that the man who can take care of life will not be hurt by any of these things, he means that one who cherishes the immortal spirit will not be touched by any of the causes of death, because he has overcome death in having overcome himself. As an Oriental Scripture says : "Slain tigers cannot turn and rend you !"

## LI

## CHERISHING VIRTUE

TAO brings forth, and Teh nourishes.

All things take up their several forms, and natural forces bring them to perfection.

Therefore all things conspire to exalt Tao and to cherish virtue.

But this regard of *Tao* and *Teh* is not in deference to any mandate.

It is unconstrained, and therefore it endures for ever.

For *Tao* produces all things, and *Teh* nourishes, increases, feeds, matures, protects, and watches over them.

To produce without possessing ; to work without expecting ; to enlarge without usurping ; this is the sublime virtue !

All things whatsoever are exalted in their several virtues. It is the virtue (*Teh*) of Tao to produce, and it is therefore exalted in its productions. It is the *Teh* (virtue or special aptitude) of Nature to cherish and sustain those productions, and by this cherishing it is exalted. For the Creator has honour in His creatures, the king has honour in his subjects, the mother has honour in her children, and the teacher has honour in his pupils.

But man, who produces nothing, but only uses or abuses things as he finds them, takes the honour and credit of action, of possession, and of increase to himself, because he has missed his mark and lost his virtue, and is running after things which do not concern him. He puts together this and that and calls it an invention, securing it to himself by letters patent, taking glory in it as if it were a thing new-sprung from the womb of Nature. But if heaven produces this and that and cements them with an idea, we may rightly regard the whole thing as a divine combination, and not anything in which man has any proprietary rights. Philanthropy and altruism are out of date, and so the particular form of food that is advertised as containing "all things necessary for sustaining life" is certain to be a patent yielding a profit of anything over twenty-five per cent. profit to its manufacturer or proprietor. But we have a right to wonder whether mankind is so greatly benefited by these complexities of machinery and dividends. Where shall we find productiveness without the desire to possess, industry without hope of reward, enlargement of the sphere of activity without usurpation of the rights of others? Yet one may see men and women by hundreds working for years in succession at their several "hobbies," taking their satisfaction in the mere act, and looking for no ulterior reward. Some of the greatest works on record have been done in what we call "spare time," and done without thought of fame or remuneration. One sees the same thing in the divine offices of motherhood, wherein each successive day is filled with the same ungrudging care for the offspring, with ever new sacrifices and ever growing love, through all the long years of pain and tribulation. And

only one thing is certain to the mother's heart. Each day of such maternal care gives the child additional strength to stand alone. Each day takes it another step further from the mother's side. Yet the mother, knowing this, helps it !

"Great devotion requires great sacrifice," says the Sage, and it is consoling to see that in spite of all the injustice and greed and vanity of the world, humanity is capable of great devotion, and also of great sacrifice.

## LII

### GOING BACK TO THE CAUSE

THAT from which the universe sprang may be looked upon as its Mother.

By knowing the Mother you have access to the child.

And if, knowing the child, you prefer the Mother, though your body perish, yet you will come to no harm.

Keep your mouth shut, and close up the doors of sight and sound, and as long as you live you will have no vexation.

But open your mouth, or become inquisitive, and you will be in trouble all your life long.

To perceive things in the germ is intelligence.

To remain gentle is to be invincible.

Follow the light that guides you homeward,  
and do not get lost in the darkness.

This I call using the eternal.

---

It will be remembered that Laotze has already spoken of Existence as the first Emanation: "The One emanated the two," that is to say, the First Great Cause produced Heaven and Earth, or Spirit and Matter. This Spirit, as the First Existence, he calls the "Mother" of all things. In the sixth chapter he says: "Like the river of the valley, the Spirit is never dried up. I call it the Mother-deep."

By Spirit-Matter, or "Heaven and Earth," we must understand the whole of Nature, noumenal and phenomenal, visible and invisible.

By the union of Heaven and Earth mankind is born into the world, being compounded of the flesh and the Spirit. Wherefore, as Laotze says, by knowing Nature we have access to her offspring, and if, knowing the latter (humanity), we prefer Nature, we shall come to no harm.

The Old Philosopher goes on to illustrate the great amount of trouble involved in depending on the sense-perceptions. Our senses are deceived by their own limitations, our reason is assailed by doubts, and our minds are led astray by lying sophistries. Speech, originally a means of expressing our natural feelings, is now a fine art too frequently used only to simulate feelings which we do not possess, or to cloak those which we do not wish to reveal. Hence there is a lack of spontaneity in human relations. The influence of this art of simulation upon the individual and national character is of a most subtle, pernicious, and enduring nature. It culminates in that particular form of self-deception which is quickly followed by complete loss of faith in one's own ideals and principles, and a plunge into spiritual degeneracy—a soul-suicide—the dread consequence of this habit of mental and moral intoxication.

And when a man has lost faith in himself he will not show any faith in others, which is another aspect of the fact that "where faith is lacking it is not met with trust." That repudiation of our brotherhood, which first fell from the lips of the man "Cain," has spread its cancerous roots through the world to such an extent that the preservation of individual integrity is hardly possible except by a degree of isolation wholly unnatural to man. To the spiritual eye the world appears to be filled with mummers, moving stealthily about among the shadows, masked and muffled and cloaked like so many conspirators. And they call this evil-looking Society the "Brotherhood of Man"!

We are in danger of losing our way in the darkness. "Follow the light that leads you home," says the Sage; follow the original doctrine of Simplicity; follow the Light of the World, which shineth in the darkness and is not comprehended, the true light that lighteth every man when he cometh into the world. Little children have this light; it is in their eyes, in every fibre of their being; they are filled with it, and radiate it like a golden halo. Who that is not blind has not seen it? Every man has it; but many stand in fear of it, lest it should reveal them to themselves for what they are, and so they hide it away under a bushel. It is the source of their infant goodness, purity, and truth. It is their original Simplicity.

### LIII

## INCREASING EVIDENCE

AN that I were wise enough to follow the great Tao!

Administration is a great undertaking.



The great Tao is extremely simple, but the people prefer the complex ways.

While the palace is extremely well appointed, the fields may be full of tares, and the granaries may be empty.

To dress grandly, to carry sharp swords, to eat and drink excessively, and to amass great wealth, this I call stylish theft.

That it is not Tao is certain.

---

It is evident that the Old Philosopher had it in his heart to be a great reformer, but his doctrine forbade any such interference with human polity. The management of such reforms as are necessary in the world he would wisely leave to God. He perceived that the complexity of life first of all arose from the conflict between the higher and lower natures of man, from the effort to accommodate the human to the bestial and the spiritual to the carnal. He wisely discerned between the essential good in man and the accidental evil in his life. He saw man in equilibrium, and therefore in freedom ; in freedom, and therefore in conflict—which latter he saw to arise from the insecurity of freedom to the individual. He saw mankind inclining to evil in the pursuit of wealth, position, fame, and power ; and this meant that man was in danger of losing the freedom into which he was born. He therefore made his appeal to the higher nature of man, and wisely left the rest to Heaven.

As one having held office under the Emperor King-wang, the Old Philosopher must have had ample opportunity of contrasting the life at the Palace with that of the people



without, and his conclusion was that "administration is a difficult thing." For while the king may himself be intent on simple and virtuous living, the country may be full of rogues and bandits, the people may have no proper food for their minds, the natural industries may be neglected, and provender may be scarce in the land. Therefore he looks upon all distinctions arising from difference of estate to be a source of complexity and evil, and he calls it stylish theft. "That it is not Tao is certain." For the distinction of Tao is its simplicity, and the greatness of Tao is its unity.

## LIV

## THE ROOT AND ITS BRANCHES

HE who plants rightly never uproots.

He who lays hold rightly never relinquishes.

His posterity will honour him continually.

Whoever develops the Tao in himself will be rooted in virtue.

Whoever develops the Tao in his family will cause his virtue to spread.

Whoever develops the Tao in his village will increase prosperity.

Whoever develops the Tao in the kingdom will make good fortune prevalent.

Whoever develops Tao in the world will make virtue universal.

I observe myself, and so I come to know others.

I observe my family, and all others grow familiar.

I study this world, and others come within my knowledge.

How else should I come to know the laws which govern all things, save thus, that I observe them in myself?

---

The Sage likens the Tao to a plant which has its root in the heart of every man, and thence by cultivation springs forth in widespreading branches. The old maxim, *Ab uno disce omnes*, is closely followed by Laotze. By the study of his own nature and that of the people by whom he was immediately surrounded, he obtained the key to the knowledge of human nature generally. By studying his own country he came to know others. Whether he came to know them with any minuteness or particularity is not certain; but great things have been achieved by the use of the scientific imagination, and still greater things by the intuitive sense. As a man of deep thought he might have argued inferentially that as Nature is universal, so are its forces, and these forces, acting under similar conditions, would produce similar phenomena. Astronomy, already a science of considerable advancement in China at that date, would have instructed him as to the causes of variation in climate: where there were high mountains he

would argue rapid streams, and where there was a range of such mountains he would infer the existence of great rivers. He could say with tolerable accuracy that such rivers would flow eastward. He would locate the great cities near the mouths of such rivers; he would see migration flowing westward. He would fashion his notions of dress and food and habitation by his deductions regarding climate. He would study the politics of his own country, and would know that where there were many rulers there would be intrigues and intestine wars, that the people would live in fear of their neighbours, and that so much concern about one's neighbours would lead to neglect of individual business and duties; therefore he would argue a condition of widespread poverty and dissatisfaction. Where the territory was small, the people would be more united and intent upon enlarging their borders; where the territory was large, he would find room for differences of opinion. Thus from slender knowledge he might logically infer much, seeing that he was well acquainted with human nature and human needs.

In his own country he would have observed that the character of the hill-tribes was wild and free and rugged, while that of the people of the plains was more suave and placid and polished. He would have observed that this was a reflection of their environment, and that it affected their speech in equal measure with their characters. Indeed, there is little that he could not have derived from a knowledge of so much as lay under his immediate daily observation in China, for there is but little difference in human nature the world over, while the laws which govern man and Nature are universally the same.

On the other hand, he may have used an intuitive or supernatural faculty such as appears to be awakened in man in certain phases of spiritual exaltation. If Saul of Tarsus can see Ananias coming to his house and touching his eyes that he might receive his sight, before that event happened, and if it could be given to Ananias to heal him, there is nothing singular in the supposition that similar powers of direct per-

ception should have been possessed by Laotze. In fact, it would appear that this superior order of faculty is normal to certain spiritualised conditions of life, and just what those conditions are must be a matter of special inquiry with those who desire to understand these mysteries of the human mind. But in regard to the variety of such faculties and the unity of their source, St. Paul writes very explicitly in his epistle from Philippi to the Corinthians.

## LV

## THE WONDERFUL HARMONY

THE man who is saturated with Virtue is like a little child.

Scorpions will not sting him, wild beasts will not seize him, nor will birds of prey pluck at him.

His young bones are not hard, neither are his sinews strong, yet his grasp is firm and sure.

He is full of virility, though unconscious of his sex.

Though he should cry out all day, yet he is never hoarse.

Herein is shown his harmony with Nature.

The knowledge of this harmony is the eternal Tao.

The knowledge of the eternal Tao is illumination.

Habits of excess grow upon a man, and the mind, giving way to the passions, they increase day by day.

And when the passions have reached their climax, they also fail.

This is against the nature of Tao.

What is contrary to Tao soon comes to an end.

---

Spiritualised man is frequently compared to a little child in this work of Laotze, in the later works of the Taotze commentators, and also in the New Testament Scriptures.

The statement that such are invulnerable to all hurt by reptiles, wild beasts, and birds of prey may be spoken literally; and if so, I am, for my own part, prepared to accept it literally. Not that one should pass *per saltum* from the possible to the probable and thence to the actual; but that there is an argument, both rational and scientific, for a belief in an earthly millennium and a spiritualised humanity, when in very deed "the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them." If Daniel could come forth unharmed from a den of famished lions, if Paul could shake a viper from his hand and remain unhurt, while others looking on had cause to see him fall dead, may we not conclude that the Supreme Virtue can effect a like thing for others in whom the Spirit is equally present? And Laotze is here speaking of those who are "saturated" with the Tao. Rightly speaking, there is no age in which the miraculous does not supersede the norm, and no age in which the miracle

is not comprehended by the purely natural. But the greatest miracle that can ever happen—a miracle that is nevertheless already provided for by Nature—will have place in the world when man, not constrained by the fear of death or other mortal terror, and not persuaded by the hope of a speedy reward, shall turn of his own freewill to the Simple Way and re-become a little child.

His bones shall be supple and tender indeed, for he will hold no fixed opinions, but will be plastic of mind, teachable, and accommodating. Yet his grasp will be firm and sure, for he will lay hold on verities, and they will not elude his grasp. A child can hold on to a rock, when a strong man cannot hold on to a sandhill. That which is held is ever of more consequence than the manner of holding.

In his regenerate and spiritualised condition the man will be proof against malice, unhurt by violence, and will form no food for the avaricious. The virtue of perfect Simplicity will disarm malice as does the innocence of childhood; it will be guileless and inoffensive, adaptable and yielding, so that the gentleness of its nature will avoid all strife; and because it does not display its wealth, and has nothing which it calls its own, jealousy and covetousness will pass it by.

## LVI

## THE MYSTERIOUS VIRTUE

HE who knows the Tao does not discuss it, and those who babble about it do not know it.

To keep the lips closed, to shut the doors of sight and sound, to smooth off the corners, to



temper the glare, and to be on a level with the dust of the earth, this is the mysterious virtue.

Whoever observes this will regard alike both frankness and reserve, kindness and injury, honour and degradation.

For this reason he will be held in great esteem of all men.

---

We do not make the obvious a subject of discussion. A man may argue for indefinite freewill, but once he comes into conflict with the will of Heaven he drops his polemics, and begins to rub the battered organ of his self-esteem. If a man cannot see the will of God expressed in the pre-established harmony of things in the laws of Nature, it is certain that discussion will not help him; for the hand of God is so palpably in touch with all things that one cannot but feel the vitality of it. But those who babble about the obvious make use of too many words to express the mediocrity of their intelligence. God gains nothing from the advocacy of fools.

If the Divine Being is not sufficiently illustrated in this wondrous universe, it is for all that not within man's power to complete the evidence.

To keep one's own counsel with God, to leave others to the enjoyment of their beliefs, to cease from the discernment of differences, to forego all pomp and vanity and not to shine in the daylight, to accommodate oneself to the likes and dislikes of others, and to become so humble as to be only natural—this is what the Sage calls the "Mysterious Virtue."

The world may go on its ceaseless round, but the wise man abandons the competition and strikes the short road for home,



reaching, with no greater loss than that of worldly distinction, a point in evolution which the world at large will only arrive at some thirty centuries later. The man of Tao reaches home without effort and in good breath. The people also will get home, but only after much distress, and the Sage will be there to meet them. It is better to walk straight and reach one's home than to distress oneself with running, and break down, after all, in the wilderness. "Follow the light that leads you home," says Laotze, "and do not get lost in the darkness."

## LVII

## THE GENUINE GOVERNMENT

THE righteous man may rule the nation.

The strategic man may rule the army.

But the man who refrains from active measures should be the king.

How do I know how things should be?

I know by this:—

When the actions of the people are controlled by prohibited laws, the country becomes more and more impoverished.

When the people are allowed the free use of arms, the Government is in danger.

The more crafty and dexterous the people

become, the more do artificial things come into use.

And when these cunning arts are publicly esteemed, then do rogues prosper.

Therefore the wise man says:—

I will design nothing; and the people will shape themselves.

I will keep quiet; and the people will find their rest.

I will not assert myself; and the people will come forth.

I will discountenance ambition; and the people will revert to their natural simplicity.

---

It has already been observed that Laotze had it in his power, if not in his thought, to become a great reformer, but he was too wise to take it in hand. "I perceive," he says, "that when a man with a taste for reforming the world takes it in hand, there will be no end to it."

We have in this chapter some of the reasons which appear to have influenced Laotze to refrain from active measures.

Some may consider the policy of our author to have been a species of quietism, a policy of inaction and apathy. It was none of these. That he was himself an industrious, truth-seeking, and humane person is well-established. He desired the advancement and welfare of the people, the solidarity of the empire, and the integrity of its laws. But he was no temporiser nor sycophant. He recognised that there were

two methods of reform at all times possible—the methods of patching up and that of reverting to Nature. Elsewhere he calls these methods “lopping the branches” and “feeding the root.” And he was in favour of reverting to Nature and “feeding the root.” The whitewashing of sepulchres appears to have been an ancient practice, and the patching up of obsolete institutions is still the favourite work of some forms of government. The enactment of temporary laws, of palliative measures which do not go to the root of things, is almost the sole business of modern governments. Prohibitory laws are so numerous and complex that a body is hedged in by the “must” and “must not” of local and statute law and of modern conventionality, and what he may or might do of his own natural goodness is almost sure to offend. Some day, when the people are caught in this net of their own weaving, its complexity will prove to be a matter of dismay. And in those days benevolence will be a proprietary article in the hands of the capitalists.

Whitewashing a house may give it a good outside appearance, but it will not secure domestic peace to those that dwell in it. If the world is to be reformed we must get at the root of it. We must reform the mind of the world, and the body of it will be regulated at the same time. To put a pig in a palace will not make of it a gentleman. Left to itself, it will choose the sty. By making citizenship compulsory we have cleared the seas of pirates and the hills of bandits, but you will find them in all our great cities. As to the expediency of herding the wolves with the sheep, those who have the matter of government in hand should be able to decide. If our author would have made the great pirate an admiral and the great bandit a general, it would not have been on considerations of merit, but of utility ; for we know that while he repudiated merit, he had great regard for the natural uses of things and persons. And perhaps, after all, this would be better than making outlaws and enemies of all pirates and bandits !

## LVIII

LETTING OTHERS REFORM  
THEMSELVES

A FREE and generous government gives the people a chance to develop.

When the government is rigid and exacting the people are cramped and miserable.

Misery is but the shadow of happiness.

Happiness is but the cloak of misery.

When will there be an end to them?

If we dispense with rectitude, distortion will assert itself; and what was good in its way will give place to what is evil.

Verily the people have been under a cloud for a long time.

Therefore the wise man is full of rectitude, but he does not chip and carve at others.

He is just, but does not admonish others.

He is upright, but he does not straighten others.

He is enlightened, but he does not offend with his brightness.

If every man could exercise individual self-government, the work of administration would be reduced to a cipher. The Old Philosopher believed in giving the people a chance to develop themselves. Modern local government may be a step in the right direction ; but while people of one town are allowed to govern others—their neighbours—what may pass as neighbourly solicitude is apt to be mistaken for masterly interference.

By throwing the responsibility of government on the people, the king is rendered free from censure. By putting the responsibility on the individual, the people are not disgraced. But when the individual can take it upon himself to govern himself, both the king and the people have rest.

By distributing honours the fire of ambition is quenched and the throne is rendered secure. By distributing wealth the canker of discontent is rooted out, ostentation is stifled, and the hungry are satisfied. By distributing work the yoke is everywhere lightened, and by not having to care so much for the bodily needs the people have more time to cultivate their souls.

This is the policy of government which Laotze would have us follow. It is a policy of freedom and liberality, of true conservatism. Misery and happiness are relative states, and the dominance of one over the other in the individual or nation constitutes the temporal condition of life. Neither one nor the other state is permanent. A man cannot be truly miserable till he has known happiness. It is the cloaking of happiness by misery that makes him wretched. Of the happy we observe that they are not miserable ; of the miserable, that they are not happy. But even so we speak of a condition that is both relative and temporary. Laotze would make an end of all that is temporary and comparative in human life. For happiness and misery he would substitute contentment ; for government and authority he would advocate self-control and non-interference. In the elder generations of every age he will find many supporters, and in the world's maturity the

idea will become universal. The world's first estate will also be its last, for as Laotze says, "Tao is hidden, and it has no name ; but it is good at beginning and finishing."

## LIX

## PRESERVING THE TAO

IN ruling men and in serving Heaven there is nothing like moderation.

By means of it one attains to his first estate.

When this is attained a man is possessed of an indefinite store of virtue.

With such a store of virtue he will overcome everything.

And of this mastery there will be no limit.

Thus, without hindrance, he may possess the Kingdom.

Such a man has the mother-constitution, and will endure indefinitely.

He is like the plant whose roots are deep and whose stem is firm.

Thus may a man live long and see many days.



Moderation is the keynote of the doctrine of Simplicity. There is nothing of the conventual, the ascetic, or the abnormal either in the Old Philosopher or his teachings. Fasting and praying are not the means whereby to move the Gates of Heaven. "My yoke is easy and My burden is light," said the Christ. "It is so easy that even a child can use it," says Laotze.

Taking the Gates of Heaven by storm, is one method ; wearing them away with importunity is another. Both methods have their advocates. But another and a simpler way is revealed by Laotze.

"Having emptied yourself of everything, remain where you are," says the philosopher. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be My disciple," is the Master's ultimatum. Heaven is to be served with moderation ! What is this ? Some new doctrine, surely ! No, it is not that Heaven is to be served moderately, but *by means of* moderation ; as men are to be ruled, also by this means. We cannot be too strenuous in the service of Heaven, but it is not to be done by any kind of excessive effort. To moderate the thought and speech, to moderate feeling and action, and so to live the life of moderation, is to conserve one's powers and augment one's strength. Moderation, however, does not apply solely to the quantities, but equally to the qualities of things in use. The man who regulates the quantity of nutriment he takes, without regard to its quality, will eventually be in as sad a condition as the immoderate eater and drinker ; and the same may be said of mental and spiritual sustenance. Deep-rooted in Nature, his branches streaming to the sky, the man of moderate habits outlasts his age ; for, having exercised moderation, his forces are conserved, and his store of natural virtue is unlimited.



## LX

## FILLING THE THRONE

THE state should be governed as we cook small fish, without much business.

Bringing the Tao to the governing of the Kingdom will give rest to the shades of the dead.

Not that the Spirits will be inactive, but that they will cease to trouble the people.

But what is of more importance, the wise ruler of the people will not hurt them.

And in so far as they do not interfere with one another, their influences conspire to the general good !

---

Simplicity, purity, and perfection are the qualities of the Taoic nature. The government of the people should be thus simple and pure and perfect. Elsewhere Laotze has said that we make too much business of the matter of government, and that our machinery is far too cumbersome and complex for the work that it is required to do. Virtue consists in being true to oneself, and charity in letting alone, he says ; and he affirms that interference with the liberty of the subject is the chief cause of the general lack of self-control.

"To effect government by means of Tao is to give rest to the shades of the dead." We here come into touch with a

phase of thought that is intimately connected with the established faith in the spiritual ministrations of deceased ancestors; which faith found frequent expression in a variety of State functions in the days of Laotze, and had thus been recognised by successive rulers for at least twenty-five centuries previously. It was an essential part of the Shinto religion, a brief sketch of which will be found in my concluding notes to this work.

Whether this ancestor-worship was based on any positive knowledge of the operation in human affairs of departed souls, is not a matter of certainty. It is specifically mentioned in the *Shu-king*, where there is abundant evidence of the fact that the highest respect was paid to the spirits of the deceased, and numerous sacrifices appointed in the ancestral temples of successive dynasties. The patriarchal ruler, Yaou, who survived the deluge in China, B.C. 2348, enjoined these ceremonies upon the people, and himself observed them. In India at the present day the festival of *Shravanan* (the "shriving" ceremony), which originally took place at the winter solstice on the solar entry into the sign of the Goat, is largely connected with Pitripuja, or "ancestor-worship," and on this occasion, as in the corresponding Chinese ceremony, the eldest son performs the invocation of the spirits of the progenitors.

When man has discovered in himself the "X" rays of psychological science these questions will be capable of definite solution; but at present one can only say that the experience of one is not sufficient for all, and the evidence of one will not serve for others. Therefore those who have such evidence should wisely keep their own counsel, or confer only with those in knowledge of like experiences. If on his return from the Yukon Valley a solitary traveller should declare that the gold there is practically unlimited, thousands will give up everything they hold and will rush for it. If another, coming from a distant country, declares that its produce is abundant and the soil capable of immense commercial development, the immigration of some few enterprising and industrious people will follow in due course. But if

one should come from beyond the veil, bringing with him such evidences as can be conveniently transported thence, the fault is in no way his that they do not appeal to the senses, though that is probably the only reason there is not an immediate and extensive exodus. Proofs must always be related to the nature of the subject in question. The explorer from the Yukon Valley bears with him the marks of his experience. The voyager from the distant El Dorado speaks in the unfamiliar language of that clime, he shows connectedness in his narrative, and although he has not brought El Dorado in his vest-pocket, few would deny his evidence. So also the man from a world beyond. "The tree is known by its fruit!"

## LXI

## THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY

THE kingdom, like a river, becomes great by being lowly; it is thereby the centre to which all the world tends.

It is similar in the case of woman:

She conquers man by continual quietness.

And quietness is the same as submission.

Therefore a great state, by condescension to those beneath it, may gain the government of them.

Likewise a small state, by submission to one that is greater, may secure its alliance.

Thus the one gains adherence, and the other obtains favours.

Although the great state desires to annex and to nourish others, yet the small state desires to be allied to and serve the greater.

Thus both will be satisfied, if only the greater will condescend.

---

The teachings of the Taoists have been characterised as impracticable and effete. It has been affirmed that the followers of Laotze would, if they could, "convert the fertile soil into a barren wilderness, and the brightness of day into nocturnal obscurity." It is difficult to trace any signs of confusion or obscurity in the policy here advocated by Laotze. It is a very clear statement of the relations which should exist between a protectorate power and its allied states. But what do we see in China to-day? A fertile soil converted into a field of carnage—by interference; an ancient depository of most valuable records converted into temporary barracks—through ambition; the temples ransacked and given over to money-changers—through greed of gain; and the "light of day turned into nocturnal obscurity"—through the blindness of bigotry. *So jih yiu shih chi ki* in very deed! And the effects of that black eclipse will darken the nations for centuries to come. China did not seek missionary interference, and those who go forth with the gospel in one hand should rightly take their lives in the other. The evangel of Christ (see Mark vi., Luke ix., and John xv.) does not warrant an appeal to State protection. Rather does it advocate the doctrine of non-interference, and that the unsuccessful missionary should "shake off the dust of

his feet as a testimony against them" when leaving a people to the effects of their own faith.

Condescension and forbearance, submissiveness and quietness, are held to be of great influence in every department of life, not excepting the home. From the time that women, under the influence of Western civilisation, began to assert their "rights," they abandoned the many privileges of their sex and forfeited their claim to the special protection of their altergens. As a natural consequence women have become more obtrusive and men less chivalrous. Thousands of women crowd our city streets to-day, usurping the place of the legitimate breadwinner and throwing hundreds of men out of employment. Yet they are surprised when they are not accorded the accustomed privileges of their sex, and yet further amazed when men, finding them undomesticated and wanting in tenderness, simplicity and reserve, do not approach them with serious attentions. This influx of feminine virility has disorganised the labour market, impoverished the home, and will in time, if the teachings of Laotze be true, corrupt and demoralise the state. Virtue is not attained by attempting the work of others. It is due to keeping to one's proper place and by devotion to one's proper work in the world.

## LXII

### PRACTICAL TAO

TAO is the secret guardian of all things.

It enriches the good man and forefends the evildoer.

Its counsel is always in season ; its benevolence is always in demand.

Even those who are not good it does not forsake.

Therefore, when the Emperor takes his throne and appoints his nobles, he who comes before him bearing the insignia of a prince and escorted by a mounted retinue is not to be compared with one who humbly presents this Tao.

For why did the ancients hold it in such esteem?

Was it not because it could be had without much seeking, and because by means of it man might escape from sin?

For this it was esteemed the greatest thing in the world!

---

It has been already said that Tao is no respecter of persons (see Chapter V.). In this sense the word Tao is used to designate the Supreme Being rather than, as in some other passages, the doctrine concerning the Deity. Tao regards all persons as vessels fit for service. In this chapter it is shown that the Tao cherishes all things and persons without distinction. As the source of all intelligence its counsel is always in season; as the source of all good its benevolence is always in demand; and because it is inexhaustible it is never known to fail. The good man is thereby enabled to better his condition, and the evil man is prevented from a worse state. Therefore everyone, after his own nature, relies upon the



supreme source, and consciously or unconsciously puts his faith therein.

“Thou art the cause supreme of life,  
The hidden good in every ill,  
Which even they who live in strife  
Do serve with an unconscious will.  
Thou art the salve of hearts that bleed ;  
The grave of every ruined creed !”

Trans. from *La Nature*.

Therefore one may rely on the favour of a king, and be disappointed ; on the power of wealth, and it will fail ; on the strength of his arm, and it will forsake him ; on the fidelity of friends, and it will prove abortive. But if he relies on the Infinite Love he will never be forsaken. Hence, the man who humbly presents this doctrine of Original Simplicity to an Emperor, before he has had time to complicate the affairs of State, is more worthy to be received than a prince and his cavalcade.

Incidentally Laotze mentions that this doctrine of the Tao was the faith of the Ancients. There are good grounds for believing that Laotze had access to the ancient records, and probably had given much study to the “Grand Plan,” in which is detailed the Eightfold Path of right government, contained in the famous Book of the Lo River. This book embodied all the essentials of the doctrine of the Tao, and was an heirloom of the days of Fuh-hi. In the days of the great floods, B.C. 2348, it was lost, and history records that it was afterwards found by Ta Yu in the bed of the Lo River during the course of his great survey.<sup>1</sup> Fuh-hi, Hwang-ti, Chuen-hia, Yaou, Shun, and Ta-yu were those of the patriarchal dynasty who ruled China between the thirtieth and twenty-third centuries B.C., and were renowned and revered for their great wisdom and sanctity and the simplicity and purity of their lives. No doubt it is to records of these sages that Laotze would refer.

<sup>1</sup> See the author's translation of the *Shu-king* and Commentary.



## LXIII

## FORETHOUGHT

ACTING without design, occupying oneself without making a business of it, finding the great in what is small, and the many in the few, repaying injury with kindness, effecting difficult things while they are easy, and managing great things in their beginnings, is the method of Tao.

All difficult things have their origin in that which is easy, and great things in that which is small.

Therefore the wise man can accomplish great things without even attempting them.

He who lightly assents will seldom keep his word.

He who accounts all things easy will have many difficulties.

Therefore the Sage takes great account of small things, and so never has any difficulty.

By the expression, "acting without design," we do not understand that the action is unintentional, apathetic, and without purpose, but that it is without selfish motive and without reference to the personal advantage of action. Action, without motive of some sort, would be simply automatism, and devoid of rationality, direction, and determinism. As the Italians say: *Come si può operare chi non sa che cosa si voglia?* (How shall one act who does not know what he wants?) A motive of some sort must underlie and ensoul every action, for what is automatic and habitual was at one time voluntary and purposive. The mere choice of good and evil in motive is a purposive action, having regard to the welfare of others or of oneself. Selfishness is the worse evil, in that it has no thought of others, and therefore makes no choice of action. He who chooses that which is good is not concerned with expediency, and yet always accomplishes that which is most expedient.

To see all things as comprehended in the One is what is called "finding the many in the few," for there cannot be more than the All or less than the One. To see God in all things is to "find the Great in what is small." The study of the universe will reveal to us what an inconsiderable creature is man. The study of Man will show us what a God he may become! But to study the One in all is better than to study the many in the One, for the knowledge of differences will only lead to mental dissipation, while the knowledge of identities will bring the mind to rest.

Repaying good with good and evil with evil is mere commerce; but to repay evil with good is princely, if not divine. To give in equal measure shows competence, to give in greater measure shows affluence. The world esteems wealth and despises poverty.

"To effect difficult things while they are easy," one must take them in their beginnings. The government of the kingdom is a difficult matter, but if the king governs the Chief Subject, the kingdom may be said to govern itself. The Sage therefore

accomplishes everything without attempting it, for he has no hope that is not already included in the promise of life, no ambition which is not in harmony with the revealed Will of Heaven, and therefore he does nothing without seeing the end from the beginning. That is why he claims no merit, but ascribes all results to their Supreme Source. "Great battles are won before they are actually fought," says Sir John Lubbock. "To control our passions we must govern our habits and keep watch over ourselves in the small details of everyday life." This is what is meant by "managing great things in their beginnings."

## LXIV

## GUARDING THE SMALL

WHAT is still is easily held.

What is expected is easily provided for.

What is brittle is easily broken.

What is small is soon dispersed.

Transact your business before it takes shape.

Regulate things before confusion begins.

The tree which fills the arms grew from a tender shoot.

The castle of nine storeys was raised on a heap of earth.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

Whoever designs only destroys.

Whoever grasps, loses.

The Sage does not thus act, therefore he does no harm.

He does not grasp, and therefore he never loses.

But the common people, in their undertakings, fail on the eve of success.

If they were as prudent at the end as they are at the beginning, there would be no such failures.

Therefore the Sage is only ambitious of what others despise, and sets no value on things difficult to obtain.

He acquires no common learning, but returns to that which the people have passed by.

Thus he aims at simple development in all things, and acts without design.

---

Our author here continues the subject of the preceding chapter. It has already been stated that the book of *Tao-teh*, as delivered by Laotze, was a continuous writing without divisions and capitulation. These have been effected by the commentators, probably in the second century B.C. That Laotze wrote spontaneously, and "as the spirit moved him,"

without design or arrangement, is obvious throughout the book, and we needs must follow him. Modern literary critics will hardly appreciate this form, but they cannot, on that account, shut their eyes to its substance.

Having shown the importance of carefulness in beginning things, the Sage now shows that equal care is needed in continuing and finishing. As a picker-up of unconsidered trifles, our author reverts, as wise men will, to that which others have passed by. He goes back to the ancient doctrine which had been obliterated, and was, at his day, further threatened with the invasion of a new philosophy. He goes back to Original Simplicity, to natural development, while the world goes forward to new complexities, and from one confusion of thought to another.

On the stone which the builders rejected our philosopher takes his seat, and at this day that stone is in request. Laotze would have us rightly understand the Art of Living. He aims at the natural development and the orderly unfoldment of inherent powers. Man, as we know him, is a complex creature, a thing of admiration or of contempt, a vessel made to holy uses, yet largely filled with corruption. That dog yonder is nearer to Nature than he to God. It wanders back and forth, but manages to keep near to the cause of its welfare ; while its master, who is neither wholly natural nor wholly godly, is like a stray sheep in the desert, a fish out of water, or an owl in the sunlight. Yet is he rightly persuaded that the animal has much regard for him. It answers to his call, and prefers his hand to that of another.

Thus we see that Nature is wise without discernment ; and further, that as between Nature and God, that which leans towards God has the advantage, for man, having left Nature, inclines towards God. And in this is he rendered superior to the animal who is wholly natural. Every child has two parents, and in the choice between them it is well to keep close to one or the other, and so not to get lost.

## LXV

## SIMPLE VIRTUE

THE ancients who practised the Tao did not make use of it to render the people brilliant, but to make them simple and natural.

The difficulty in governing the people is through overmuch policy.

He who tries to govern the kingdom by policy is only a scourge to it; while he who governs without it is a blessing.

To know these two things is the perfect knowledge of government, and to keep them continually in view is called the virtue of simplicity.

Deep and wide is this simple virtue; and though opposed to other methods it can bring about a perfect order.

---

The political leader-writer in search of a subject would do well to consider this chapter, and whether he be "brilliant," or only "simple and natural," I am persuaded that he would make good use of it. For myself, being neither one nor the other,



I scarce know how to look at it. But it is observable that a brief policy makes a good budget, and an extensive policy is productive of a bad one. When a man minds his own business and concentrates his energies, he is on the way to securing his fortunes ; while those who conduct their affairs in other men's houses are never very successful in their own. The bankrupt tradesman is forced to retire to the country for the sake of his health. A defeated Government also goes to the country. And because they do this when things are on the wane, they are said to follow "the dark path." A business man is always ruined by his calculations, and a Government by its policy ; while the man who makes no calculations and pursues no policy is never defeated. It is also observed that when the Government is "in the country" affairs appear to govern themselves. We eat and sleep and pay our rates and taxes, as if the Government were in full swing and every office filled. For at such times the people take the government upon themselves, and there is no question of their good intentions.

But the godfathers appear with a new bantling, and some are for calling it Peter and others Paul. So the matter is put to the vote, and the people go about in swelling pride, every one of them an emperor with a hundred chariots to choose from if only he will honour them with the dust of his feet ! It is a great day for the people when it comes to giving a name to a thing ! At last, however, it is decided that the choice of the nation is in favour of Peter, and the godfathers take leave of the people in the country and go up to the Temple of Stephen, where, amid great rejoicing and much ceremony, the new-born child is christened. When, after a lapse of time it is found that the child is neither a Peter nor a Paul, but an Agnes or a Jezebel, the godfathers go down to the country again to confer with the people, and affairs are left to govern themselves once more.



## LXVI

## GOING BEHIND

THAT by which the great rivers and seas receive the tribute of all the streams, is the fact of their being lowly; that is the cause of their superiority.

Thus the Sage, wishing to govern the people, speaks of himself as beneath them; and wishing to lead them, places himself behind them.

So, while he is yet above them, they do not feel his weight; and being before them, he yet causes no obstruction.

Therefore all men exalt him with acclamations, and none is offended.

And because he does not strive, no man is his enemy.

---

If the authenticity of this book were not beyond question one would be justified in supposing it to be of Christian tradition, so literally does it convey, in many passages, the true teaching of the Gospels. On the virtue of Humility Laotze is insistent; and by "virtue" he conveys nothing of merit, but merely actual utility. The virtuous is the useful.

“He who would be greatest among you, the same must be servant of all,” are words familiar to every Christian. The virtue of Humility is its usefulness; whereby the people are ruled without oppression, and led forth without obstruction. The virtue of lowliness is everywhere evident, and here receives illustration. As things are esteemed on account of their rarity, so men of reclusive nature have always the greatest welcome. What is ponderable and of much gravity seeks the lowest place, where, in obscurity, it sustains all else above it and continues in safety. The mountains are lofty, but they are barren where they are highest. The valleys are lowly, but fruitful, and well watered where they are lowest. The people throng to the valleys and leave the mountain-tops alone. Where the paths are difficult and food is scarce even a great man may find no following; and the people prefer the fertile valleys where the paths are smooth, labour light, and food plentiful. On the pinnacle of the mountain there is standing room for one man. In the widespreading valleys and plains there is room for all to lie down and rest. Therefore the wise and virtuous, when seeking obscurity, betake themselves to the valleys, where they can lose themselves among the people.

To influence without compelling, to persuade without arguing, and to regulate without retarding the people, is good government. It is also the way of Heaven.

## LXVII

## THREE PRECIOUS THINGS

ALL the world avows that while my Taoism is great, it is yet incompetent !

It is its greatness which makes it appear incompetent.

If it were like others, it would long ago have been recognised as incompetent.

But I hold fast to three precious things, which also I cherish.

The first is gentleness.

The second is economy.

The third is humility.

With such gentleness I can be daring.

With such economy I can be generous.

With such humility I can be great in service, as a vessel of honour.

But in these days men forsake gentleness and become only obtrusive.

They abandon economy and become only excessive.

They relinquish humility and strive for precedence, and thus for death.

Gentleness is ever victorious in attack and secure in defence.

Therefore when Heaven would preserve a man it enfolds him with gentleness.

---

The doctrine of Tao, which appears to be so incompetent, Laotze shows to be, after all, the most practical. For when men have only succeeded by their obtrusiveness in creating strife and all manner of complications, gentleness is found to be the only salve and the only means of extricating those who are involved. When excess has emptied the coffers and exhausted the larder, it is found that economy has enough of good fare to go round. When ambition has reached its height, those who are beneath can withdraw their support! But humility sustains all positions with equal ease, and itself is safe from falling. The highest place is the most difficult to maintain, and the lowest is most difficult to undermine. Heaven sustains and directs things from beneath, as a plant is nourished from its root, while virtually ruling them from above.

## LXVIII

## IMITATING HEAVEN

THE good commander is not imperious.

The good fighter is not wrathful.

The greatest conqueror does not wage war.

The best master governs by condescension.

This is the virtue of not contending.

This is the virtue of persuasion.

This is the imitation of Heaven, and this was the highest aim of the ancients.

---

Heaven rules the universe without apparent effort. All things appear to progress of their own accord, but Heaven holds them in check by keeping a hold upon their root-natures, and so governs them from and through themselves. To fight without killing, to command without impelling, and to conquer without contending, is only possible to those who love their fellow-creatures ; and such was the ambition of the virtuous ancients. Gentleness, forbearance, and humility are far away from the principles that govern modern conditions of life.

“Gentleness, virtue, wisdom, and endurance :  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance  
Which bar the pit over Destruction’s strength !”

sang the prophetic poet who companioned the Spirit of Solitude. But look! it is but three hundred years since the Pilgrim Fathers went out, gospel in hand, to colonise America—men of simple life, of stout hearts, and of great faith. But he who built the first log cabin and traded with the Indian chief on the borders of the settlement did not dream a modern Chicago, nor conceive a possible city of New York.

It is difficult to determine the particular period of those men to whom Laotze refers to as "the Ancients," but it is safe to assume that he is speaking of the Chinese patriarchs, prior to the establishment of the Hia dynasty, concerning whom there is some fragmentary record. The earliest rulers of China were wont to speak of their "divine ancestors," and it is universally received that there was a time in the history of man when he was nearer in life to all that is virtuous and holy than now. The expression in the Hebrew Genesis, "The sons of God walked with the daughters of men," would seem to infer that the evolution of the natural man had attained a point where it was met by the involution of the spiritual; and St. Paul says, "First was that which was natural, and afterwards that which was spiritual." And prior to this quickening of the natural by the incoming of the spiritual, there were those of "the order of Melchizedek," who, like Seth and Enoch, "walked with God." The divine origin of mankind is of universal belief, and every great religious system of thought is based on this principle. But during the ascendancy of the Darwinian system it was a common but fallacious conceit of some minds to advocate the belief that man was only "a superior monkey." Latterly, however, there has been a revolt in favour of the original concept of the divine ancestry, with this curious addendum, that the monkey is only "a degenerate man"! As far as we are able to trace, it would appear that at first the earth was peopled by a race of giants, who represented the apotheosis of physical evolution in the animal man. "There were giants in the earth in those days." But later, and at the point where it is presumed that physical evolution was met by



spiritual involution, a kind of introversion took place. Since then the whole trend of human development has been towards the specialisation of faculty, the evolution of the unit from the mass, and the establishing of the ascendancy of mind over matter. I conceive that there is a great and deep mystery attaching to this tradition of the "divine ancestor" of the human race, and the Hebraic concept of "Adam," equally with that of the Chinese Fuh-hi and the Neu-wo, veils a great truth which remains for us to discover.

## LXIX

## THE USE OF SUPREME VIRTUE

A GREAT warrior has said, "I dare not be the host, I would rather be the guest; I dare not advance an inch, I would rather retire a foot."

Now this I call filing in without marshalling the ranks; baring the arms without preparing to fight; grasping the sword without unsheathing it; and advancing upon the enemy without coming into conflict.

There is nothing so unfortunate as entering lightly into battle.

For by so doing we are in danger of losing that which is most precious.

Thus it happens that when opposing forces meet in battle, he who feels the pity of it assuredly conquers.

---

It is not certainly known to whom Laotze refers as the "great warrior." Among the historical warrior kings of China there was Tai T'ang and Wu-wang, both of whom showed great forbearance towards the enemies of their country, and were reluctant to enter into battle, but the exact quotation is not to be found in the historical classic.

The expression, "I dare not be the host," means that he shrinks from giving a challenge. The terms "host" and "guest" were given to the combatants in a duel or wrestling match. The host was he who gave the challenge, and the guest he who accepted it. The host would say, "Come on! I will give you good fare!" To which invitation the guest would reply, "I have a good appetite!" They would then fall to. "Beware of entrance to a quarrel," was the sage advice of Polonius to Laertes in the play of *Hamlet*. "Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him," said the Christ.

By "that which is most precious" Laotze probably means life itself. Everything else appears subsidiary when once the battle has begun, though previously it may have seemed that honour, or possession, a throne to be saved or gained, was of greater value, since the combatants were willing to risk their lives for it. Moreover, it is always possible that a war may outlast the cause of it; and it is doubtful whether, from the first blow to the last, the bone of contention is ever held in view by any but non-combatants.

"He who feels the pity of it assuredly conquers," says Laotze. It is scarcely probable that he can mean that the feeling of pity is the cause of conquest, and the paraphrase, "He who conquers feels the pity of it," will perhaps convey the right

idea, the survivor in a combat being he who feels the pity of it all. But it is possible that Laotze had a subtle purpose in thus stating the case. It appears likely that he may have wished to say: He who feels the pity of entering into a combat, and shedding the blood of a fellow-creature, assuredly conquers *by avoiding it*. And this rendering is not altogether precluded by the phrase, "When opposing powers meet in battle," since what is designed by the meeting need not come to pass. This is in line with the former saying of Laotze, "The greatest conqueror does not wage war." He conquers himself, his inordinate ambitions, and his passions, thus gaining the greatest of all victories without hurt to others. It is possible to conquer the world with love.

## LXX

## THE DIFFICULT RECOGNITION

EASY are my words to know, and also to practise.

Yet none is able to understand nor yet to practise them.

For there is a remote origin for my words, and a supreme law for my actions.

Not knowing these, men cannot know me.

Those who know me are few, and by them I am esteemed.

For the wise man is outwardly poor, but he carries his jewel in his bosom.

In the twentieth chapter the philosopher compares himself to a waif, a little child without a home, one estranged from the people. He now indicates wherein that estrangement lies.

"There is a remote origin for my words" would seem to mean that they are of very ancient tradition, and that his teaching was that of the wise men of old, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," and in such case we may claim for the teachings of Laotze something of the sanctity of inspired utterance. But he is speaking to a later generation, which does not understand nor is able to practise his teachings.

The same is said of the generation to which the Holy Nazarene appealed: "Eyes have they, and see not: ears have they, and hear not; neither understand they in their hearts." And again: "Seeing they will not perceive, and hearing they will not understand." The prophet Isaiah likewise complained in the voice of the Spirit of Truth: "I was found of them that sought me not, and made manifest to them that enquired not concerning me." And of Israel he said: "All day long have I stretched out my hands to a perverse and hostile generation!"

But the Old Philosopher takes comfort in the fact that by the few who understand him he is greatly esteemed.

"There is a supreme law for my actions," he says; and from what we have already seen of his teachings, it is certain that he refers to the law of love.

It is perhaps better to regard the whole chapter as written in an impersonal sense and as referring rather to the teachings themselves than he who delivers them. Then it is by no means difficult to understand that the law of Love, which is the law of self-sacrifice, is as easy to know as it is hard to practise. And because the world is inherently selfish, the doctrine of the Tao cannot largely appeal to it; but to the few who are capable of holding and using it there is nothing more estimable.

Further, by the expression "outwardly poor" we see that the doctrine of the Tao offers no attractions to the pharasaical lover of the pomp and circumstance of ritualism, for it is a doctrine which, when received, is hidden away in the heart. Thus while

it is at all points in harmony with the gospel teaching, the promulgation of this doctrine would be as strongly resisted at this day by the upholders of Ecclesiasticism as was the teaching of the Buddha by the Brahmins, or that of the Christ by the Pharisees and Scribes.

## LXXI

## THE DISEASE OF KNOWING

To know one's ignorance is the best part of knowledge.

To be ignorant of such knowledge is a disease.

If one only regards it as a disease, he will soon be cured of it.

The wise man is exempt from this disease.

He knows it for what it is, and so is free from it.

---

Knowledge as a mere accretion of detail is never referred to by our author with any affection or esteem. He here shows that the knowledge of our ignorance is the essential part of true knowledge. "Dispense with your learning and save yourself anxiety," he says in Chapter XX. The discernment of differences will not help us to distinguish between what is essentially good or evil, for there is only one source of good, and what is not of that "cometh of evil." To know our own

ignorance is the end of all knowledge, to know the source of knowledge is the beginning of wisdom ; but to be ignorant of these things is called "chasing the shadows." The unconsciousness of our ignorance renders all our learning so much folly. We give a name to a thing, or a meaning to a word, and because we can recognise them again, or recall a host of these things to our memories, we are esteemed learned.

But if we could know the thing in itself, or the subject of the word, we might rightly be esteemed wise. If we call the oak a sycamore, we may be corrected, and if we distinguish between them, we have corrected ourselves ; but knowing the virtue of either the oak or the sycamore, we may dispense with the names of them, and call them what we will. So that if one would be learned, let him study the names of things, and be apt at affixing labels and the making of catalogues. But if he would be wise, let him study the natures of things and their uses, and chief among things, himself ; for all things are related to him through his own nature, and not otherwise. And thus growing wise, man may come to see God in all things, and all things in God. So that by whatever name we call the Supreme Being is a matter of small consequence, so that the Virtue of that Being is found in ourselves.

Regarding this discernment of the essential virtue of things, Tennyson has this exquisite little verse—

“Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you from the crannies ;  
And I hold you in my hand,  
Little flower ; but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should understand what God and Man is !”



## LXXII

## LOVING ONESELF

WHEN men do not have a right fear of present dangers, they run into extremes of peril.

Let them beware of enlarging the house, being weary of present conditions.

If they do not despise it, no such weariness will arise.

This is why the Sage, while possessed of self-knowledge, does not parade himself.

He loves, but does not value himself highly.

Thus he puts away pride, and is content.

---

Laotze indicates that there is nothing wrong in self-regard and the care of the person. The wrong consists in ostentation and reckless exposure. To keep out of danger one must have a right fear of present dangers, for by a bad beginning one is only retarded; but by running to extremes he makes a bad finish, which is beyond remedy. Weariness of life and discontent is a condition of the mind induced by circumstances. It is easier to change our condition of mind than to change our circumstances, for the one is wholly within our own control, while the other is largely subject to the will of others. Let the



discontented man but compare his lot with that of many others, or consider for a moment what a very little, after all, he has actually contributed to the sum of human happiness or to the regulation of things as they are. The free-will and liberty of man consists, mainly, in his mental view-point and attitude towards things as he finds them, and very little in the making of his own environment and conditions of life. Self-knowledge is the chief means of self-adjustment to one's surroundings, and it is the perennial source of contentment ; for the knowledge of self is the knowledge of all else that is related to the self, and by self-control, which results from self-knowledge, we may regain some of our lost liberty and contentment. Where we find it impossible to advance an inch, we may always retire a foot.

## LXXIII

## FREEDOM OF ACTION

HE whose courage is expressed in daring will soon meet death.

He whose courage is shown in self-restraint will be preserved.

There are, then, two kinds of courage ; the one is injurious and the other of advantage.

But who is to say why one of them should incur the judgment of Heaven ?

That is why the Sage finds it difficult to act.

The celestial Tao does not strive, and yet overcomes everything.

It does not speak, yet it is skilful in replying.

It does not call, yet things come to it readily.

It is quiet in its methods, yet its plans are thoroughly effective.

The net of Heaven has large meshes, and yet nothing escapes it !

---

The courage of daring is injurious, and the courage of prudence is of advantage. This is worth knowing. In common experience it is easy enough to act, but very difficult to restrain oneself. The Spirit of the Age, which Shelley calls Demogorgon, is one of hideous self-inflation, ambition, rivalry, simulation, and patchwork. If one cannot be drawn into the field of competition, he is driven into it. All the world over, individual responsibility and self-control are being thrown over to delegates, so that men may rush into the field to fight for wealth and position. Men are paid to do the people's thinking for them, and to serve up the husks of badly digested records and statistics. Causes are neglected, and effects are regarded as essential ; principles are of small account, while the great thing is to be on the right side of the market. Under such conditions a premium is set on the courage of daring, while the courage of self-restraint is regarded as lack of enterprise.

Yet, as Laotze says : "Who can tell why one should incur the judgment of Heaven?" But he shortly gives the answer : "The celestial Tao does not strive, yet it overcomes everything. . . . It is quiet in its methods, yet its plans are thoroughly effective. . . ." And what is not Tao soon comes to an end.

While giving to man a wonderful range of freedom, a play-space that is enjoyed by no other creature, Heaven has involved him in a network of laws from which he cannot escape. A fool and his folly soon comes to an end, and the sooner we resign ourselves to the over-arching law of Love, the expressed Will of Heaven, the sooner we shall come into our freedom. For as nothing escapes the net of Heaven, it is better to resign oneself and be content with one's condition, and so avoid rushing at the net, which, for aught we know, is spread about us for our own preservation.

## LXXIV

## THE FAULT OF COERCION

WHEN the people do not fear death, of what use is it to overawe them with it as a penalty?

And if they were always held in fear of death, and I could lay my hand upon all evil doers and slay them, would I dare to do it?

There is always the Great Executioner!

For one to usurp that office is like a novice cutting out the work of a great architect.

Such an one rarely fails to cut his own hands!

Travellers in the East have frequently remarked upon the contempt in which the fear of death is held by Oriental nations, and especially by the Chinese. It would, perhaps, be nearer the truth to say that they have an indifference to life, rather than a contempt of death; and the reason for this is not far to seek. Generations of indigence and misery, consequent upon tyranny and oppression, and the absence of any moral restraint, has made life a burden to millions, so that even suicide appears to them the right thing under certain unusually distressful conditions. And certainly the sudden and brief pang of death is not to be compared with the pain of living the life endured by thousands to-day. So that it is not to be wondered at that murderous instincts are awakened in the more robust and suicidal tendencies in the more sensitive of the sufferers. The sudden breaking down of the reservoirs of life—what is it but a premature old age? It would come about in the natural course of things.

The wrong to humanity is apparently inconsiderable. What is it to the world that it should be relieved of the senile, the incurably diseased, the indigent, and miserable, and all those who prefer the uncertainties of death to the ever-present fact of irremediable suffering? The man destroyed, Nature will build up another in his place. What then?

Laotze teaches a doctrine of conservatism. The wrong, he would say, is in usurping the right to destroy that which man himself cannot rebuild. "My body," he says, "is not my own. It is the delegated exuviae of God." This, again, is the reason why the Sage finds it difficult to act, and because of his proper regard for life he does not look on death as a trivial thing. He looks upon death as an enemy to that part of him which is subject to death. He has respect for his enemies, but seeks to avoid them and so to conquer them.

Capital punishment is distasteful to the higher sentiments of the educated mind. Two wrongs do not make a right. The fear of death is no deterrent to the lawless, who are naturally men of daring; and as death is sure to come to all, and soonest

to men of reckless nature, of what use is this usurpation of what is strictly a divine prerogative, the taking away of human life? "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." For if a man fall into the hands of the law, he shall presently be free; but if he fall into the hands of God, who shall deliver him but God Himself? And His ways are not our ways.

But Laotze points a greater danger, that of cutting one's hands in the work of execution. This is worth considering.

Now, who is responsible for the criminal creation—the man who follows his own brute nature, or the civilisations of the past which have evolved the criminal product and so have rendered crime a consequence? Laotze would say that it rests with civilised or corrupted methods of government. He would show that the body corporate of humanity is affected by an interdependence of action from root to stem, from stem to branch, from branch to twig, and leaf, and flower, and fruit. Members of a single constitution, we are all governed by the same laws; not directly, perhaps, but successively according to dependency and relationship. And so, as regards this "lopping of the branches," this cutting off of the criminal product, is it not equivalent to cutting one's own hand? And if, hurting his hand, a man should cut it off, would that be so well for him as nursing it back to health and strength?

Criminal law must always form a part of civil government; but it should be corrective and not punitive. At all events we should give a true accent to every mandate; and in that which says: "*Whosoever* sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," the first word is as important as the rest. If it were regarded as religiously as the middle and the end, man would hesitate to begin the work of extermination.

## LXXV

## THE EVIL OF AVARICE

THE people suffer from famine on account of the heavy taxation put upon them.

☞ This is the cause of their need.

The people are difficult to govern because of the overbearing of their superiors.

This is the cause of their trouble.

The people make light of dying because of the great hardships of trying to live.

This is the reason of their indifference to death.

Therefore to keep living in obscurity is better than making overmuch of it.

---

Heavy taxation may not be regarded as the cause of bad crops, but it makes those crops difficult to be got at by the people ; and taxes are great in proportion as the administration becomes complex and ambitious. Self-government consists, largely, in foregoing our ambitions, in being content, and in refraining from conflict with others. It is a great work, but much easier than it is made out to be ; and the more of it that each one of us can take in hand, the better for the country. It is, moreover, considerably cheaper than governing by delegates.



It is also more effective, for when people govern themselves they never complain of the rigour of the law. Hence in self-government there is a greater feeling of freedom with a greater amount of self-restraint.

Incidentally Laotze answers our question as to the cause of indifference to death, which was raised in the preceding commentary. He shows that it is really on account of the difficulty of living. Yet, as he elsewhere very pleasantly remarks, "the people prefer the complex ways." This is indeed true. The day was young in the West when Laotze was writing these words. Yet look around and see how true they are of all times and nations! The history of England was in the germ when China was producing its Sages. It was only a seedling when the Gospel of Simplicity was first written and taught. To-day it is such a network of complexity that each year's almanac is a history of itself. The only danger that threatens England is her comparative greatness. The greatness of simplicity is one thing, the complexity of greatness is another.

The real strength of a constitution is not to be rightly measured by the population of the country or the extent of its possessions and dependencies, but by the facility of living enjoyed by its units. Now as regards Great Britain and Ireland, the population in 1862 was over twenty-nine millions, the poor rate 8s. 5d. per capitem, and the income tax 7½d. in the £. At the present time, with a population of forty-one millions, the poor rate is over 14s., and the income tax is 1s. in the £. The number of paupers has increased *pari passu* with the population, while taxation for their relief has increased *pro rata* more than 2s. per head of the population! For every £1 that is levied for the relief of the poor as poor rate, it costs 10s. for purposes of administration, the actual relief to the poor per £1 of the rate being only 10s. Such being the results of organised charity, of measuring goodwill by the pint and pound, one may be excused for preferring old-fashioned methods of spontaneous giving of alms, whereby benevolence could secure a friend and gratitude a protector.

## LXXVI

## THE DANGER OF STRENGTH

MAN at his birth is supple and tender, but in death he is rigid and strong.

It is the same with everything.

Trees and plants in their early growth are pliant and soft, but at the end they are withered and tough.

Thus rigidity and strength are concomitants of death, but softness and gentleness are companions of life.

Therefore the warrior who relies on his strength cannot conquer death, while the powerful tree becomes a mere timber support.

For the place of the strong and the firm is below, while that of the gentle and yielding is above.

---

Laotze pursues the old theme of the virtue of gentleness by pointing the antithesis of the danger of strength. Swedenborg's idea of immortality, that it is a condition of "forever growing young," is supported by our author, who shows that it is a state of continual and perfect recuperation. From a variety

of sustaining sources the body continues to grow in bulk and strength, its powers are awakened, and the passage from childhood to youth and from youth to adolescence is one of steady increase of vital power. Then there comes a change. The recuperative power gradually declines, the faculties become obscured, the functions fail, and in course of time the body falls into senility and decay.

There is therefore a point, varying with the individual, at which the recuperative power reaches its climax and begins to wane. When pathology can determine this organic crisis and prescribe a remedy, something may be done to lengthen human life—if that is an end desired, apart from the power to render it worthier the living. That the medicine is often worse than the disease, only those know who shrink from death as the only remedy as yet discovered for the disease of living.

But Laotze here defines the cause of decay and death, and prescribes a remedy. The cause of death, he says, is non-adaptability of the individual to the circumstance of life: the effort to remain fixed while everything else changes, the folly of exerting one's strength. When a man loses his hold upon simple things, such as Truth, little children, and the Great Tao, he is beginning to get old.

With a small stomach and a big chest, one may live a long time. With great strength and small occasion to display it, one may reach years that are quite exceptional. But with a gentle heart and much adaptability, a man may wear out successive generations.

## LXXVII

## THE TAO OF HEAVEN

LIKE the bending of an archer's bow is the Tao of Heaven !

It brings down that which is high, and raises up that which is depressed.

It takes away where there is excess, and gives where there is deficiency.

The Tao of Heaven makes all things equal.

This Tao is not of man.

Man takes from the needy to add to his own excess.

Who is he that, having a superabundance, can bring it to the service of the world ?

Only he who has the Tao.

This is why the wise man acts without expectation of reward, and completes his task without claiming merit.

For thus he hides his wealth.

The use of the word *Tao* in this connection is to define the operation of celestial laws in human life. The simile used is that of the old cross-bow, whose bending is "like the Tao of Heaven" in its operations. The Tao is a great leveller of things, taking away from excess and giving to deficiency. Thus the "Song of the Virgin":—

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat,  
And hath exalted the humble and meek.  
He hath filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He hath sent empty away!"

"This Tao is not of man," or "this is not the way of man," says Laotze. The greed of gain, the lust of power, the ambition of fame, are the ruling passions of the civilised world. But the teaching of the Old Philosopher is not less true because it is unpopular. All virtue is in use, says Laotze. So much as a man can use, so much only can he bring to human service. Whatever is in excess of his power to use is so much withheld from the service of man. Too much learning is, for this reason, to be disparaged; while wisdom, by virtue of its simplicity, its adaptability and efficiency, can always be safely brought to the test of utility. If a man had no more land than he could cultivate, his cares would be considerably narrowed, and others might then enjoy a competence also. But Laotze did not argue for a literal commonwealth. He was not a dead-leveller. He recognised the "diversity of gifts" in men, and he would only have circumscribed a man's possessions by his ability to use. He had no notion of plotting out the earth into equal holdings. Henry George was not his disciple. Laotze simply specifies that the power to use is the only right to possess. Thus he takes his place in history as the first of Socialists, and possibly the wisest. Therefore if a man can use food, let him have enough; if he use knowledge, let him take his fill. But if a man can use the Tao it will come to him of its own accord.

There is nothing that the Tao cannot effect, and nothing that it does not use. Therefore he who has the Tao has more

than his share of good things ; but he brings them to the service of the world. Having a superabundance, he can work without regard to his reward ; he can perfect his work and leave it for what it is and the good it may do ; all the merit being in the doing, not in the power to do or in what is done. And this merit he also foregoes, because he ascribes things to their right source.

## LXXVIII

## ACCEPTING THE TRUTH

NOTHING on earth is so weak and yielding as water, but for breaking down the firm and strong it has no equal.

This admits of no alternative.

All the world knows that the soft can wear away the hard, and the weak can conquer the strong ; but none can carry it out in practice.

Therefore the Sage says : He who bears the reproach of his country is really the lord of the land. He who bears the woes of the people is in truth their king.

The words of truth are always paradoxical !



The yielding nature of water is due to its incompressibility. Whether Laotze was aware of this fact is not certain, though we know that the Chinese were anciently informed of many scientific facts which were independently discovered many centuries later in the West. That he had good reason to know the irresistible strength of water is beyond a doubt, for he had lived on the banks of the Hwang-Ho. Yet although so strong and invincible, there is nothing more adaptable than water, and because of its adaptability it is everywhere in evidence. The element is a favoured one with Laotze, who often compares it to natural virtue. Everyone knows that the soft and weak can overcome the hard and strong, yet "none can carry it out in practice." So there is no great virtue in the knowledge. As already observed, it is possible for a man to have more knowledge than he can use. Surfeit is the characteristic of all ages in civilised countries, because civilisation accentuates the inequalities of individual faculty, and produces the greatest disparities of fortune, so that some have a surfeit of good things and others a surfeit of evils. All are in a bad way. Hence the knowledge is only a surfeit and a congestion.

The fourth section of this chapter is one that might serve for the subject-matter of a separate and a larger work. Time after time we find, in following the track of the Sage's thought, that the mind is carried forward from the sixth century B.C. to the dawn of the Christian Era, and the person of the Old Philosopher assumes the proportions of a Greater Prophet, or a spiritual herald, sounding through the centuries these forewords of the new evangel! One is tempted to ask the question: Had Laotze any foreknowledge of the great Advent? Had he caught some rays from the new Light in advance of the Western world? Or is it not that the Spirit of Truth is accessible to man in all ages and nations, and that although there is "a diversity of operations," it is ever "the same Spirit"? Compared with certain passages of Isaiah, which are generally held to signify the ministry of Jesus Christ, and referred to the gospel narrative, these words of Laotze have a singular resonance and meaning (cf. Isa. liii.).

## LXXIX

## KEEPING ONE'S BOND

WHEN a compromise is effected after a long dispute, one of the parties retains a grudge: how can this be called a good settlement?

Therefore the wise man takes his part of the bond, and does not insist upon having the other.

The virtuous man attends only to his engagements in the bond, while the man without virtue contrives for his own advantage.

The Tao of Heaven has no favourites; it always aids the good man.

---

"The wise man," says Laotze, "has a covert agreement with Heaven, by means of which he is a continual receiver and preserver of good things." Being cautious, he does not rashly enter into a bond, though he is in agreement with all things. He attends to his own business, and does not stand in the way of others. What he risks he is prepared to lose, since he "takes his part of the bond, and does not insist on the other." He does his own duty, but does not compel others. He is under bond to Heaven, to his fellows, and to himself; and to

these he holds in justice, integrity, and patience, doing his work in the world, and claiming no merit therein.

"Heaven has no favourites ; it always aids the good man," is a statement as true as it is witty. It is an affirmation of the law of Eternal Good ; it is in perfect agreement with the Scripture saying—"All things work together for good to them that love God."

If Heaven discerned between good and evil, the aiding of the good would be the result of deliberate choice and favour. But it cannot be so. Some things exist by Divine Will and others by Divine Indulgence. Only that which is good in things and persons can claim the recognition of Heaven, and whatever exists in this world depends upon that which is the potential good in it. But the virtuous man acts from this inherent goodness, the potentiality for good having become active in him ; but the evildoer acts only from the privation of goodness. We call that dark which is not light, and that evil which is not good ; but that there is good in things evil is the warrant of their existence. That is the good which Heaven "always aids," whatever is good in man or the world ; and of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth there is only one test—that of Harmony. It is the characteristic of everything Divine. We see it in the universe of worlds and in the laws which govern them. We see it in everything which is purely natural, and we see it in the lives of good men and women. This is the covert agreement which the good man has with Heaven. They both make for Harmony.

## LXXX

## STANDING ALONE

IF I had a small kingdom and but ten or a hundred men of ability, I would not administer with them.

I would teach the people to look upon death as a grievous thing, and then they would not go abroad to meet it.

Though they had boats and carriages, yet they would not go away in them.

Though they had armour, yet they would never have occasion to wear it.

The people should return to the use of the quipu.

They should find their coarse food sweet, think their plain clothes grand, regard their homes as places of rest, and take delight in their own simple pleasures.

Though the neighbouring state could be

seen by us, and the crowing of the cocks and the barking of the dogs could be heard,

Yet my people would grow old, and die before ever feeling the need of having intercourse with it.

---

Our author would have led his people back to their original simplicity of life and thought. He would not keep them in ignorance of what was essential to be known, but he would not give them learning which they could not use without hurt to themselves and their neighbours. He would not unfit them for their natural work, nor would he equip them for aught else. There would be no compulsion. He would teach them that Death was an enemy to the living, as greed is an enemy to possession. The people would therefore stay at home in regular enjoyment of their simple, honest, and contented lives, valuing that which they had rather than that which they had not, and regarding what is essential as of greater importance than what is fortuitous. They would hold to the incident of life and avoid the accident. They would ply upon their own rivers and traverse their own roads. The state would maintain friendly relations with its neighbours, indulgent to those that were smaller and submissive to those that were greater than it. Thus it would have patrons and adherents on every side of it. It would not obtrude in the affairs of others, nor would it strive for precedence. It would not, therefore, be aggressive. What it produced in excess of its needs, it would contribute to others whose produce was deficient. Its excellence would sustain defects of others. It would have many gates by which to come in, and only one by which to go out; and because of its easy access none would use arms to invade it. Hence it would not be on the defensive, and would have no use for armour.

"The people would return to the use of the quipu." This

instrument consists of a series of coloured strings, and was used for reckoning and conveying information by means of knots tied in them. It was in ancient use in China, and also among the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru. It preceded the use of the calculus or pebble, but is probably not so ancient as the knotted stick, which also was used for the same purposes, the knotes taking the place of the knots.

But let us return to our Utopia and the text. The people would go back to the use of such knowledges only as sufficed for the conduct of their daily lives ; and what was enough for the fathers of the race would prove enough for those living in like simplicity and virtue. Contentment and peace would characterise their lives. Avoiding excesses, they would also avoid disease, and living natural lives, they would die natural deaths.

But of the Tao and the knowledge of celestial things, the Philosopher would sufficiently have informed them. "For who is he, that, having a superabundance, can bring it to the service of the world? Only he who has the Tao!" He would make his people wise as well as good ; and this union of wisdom and goodness, when related to the uses of daily life, is that which Laotze calls the Tao.



## LXXXI

## THE EVIDENCE OF SIMPLICITY

SINCERE words are not grand.

Grand words are not faithful.

The man of Tao does not dispute.

They who dispute are not skilled in Tao.

Those who know it are not learned.

The learned do not know it.

The wise man does not lay up treasure.

The more he expends on others, the more he gains for himself.

The more he gives to others, the more he has for his own.

This is the Tao of Heaven, which penetrates but does not injure.

This is the Tao of the wise man, who acts but does not strive.

In this, his concluding chapter, the Old Philosopher arrays the evidences of simplicity, the guarantees of the man of Tao. His doctrine is to be distinguished by its sincerity and simplicity, and not by the grandeur of words. For even in his day the Truth was obscured by logic, and logic was lost in rhetoric. Although skilful in replying, the man of Tao is no controversialist. He is not learned. The Tao is his only authority. Where others lose themselves in a complex accretion of choice details, the man of Tao discerns only a dust-heap. What others call the Treasure-house of Knowledge, he calls the Great Lumber-room. He is economical in use, but not greedy in acquiring. His wealth consists in giving freely of what he has for his own, not in the acquisition of what is another's. He discerns the true nature of persons and things, but does not use that knowledge to the disadvantage of others ; or as Laotze says : He penetrates but does not injure ; he acts but does not strive.

And with these words the Old Philosopher concluded his book on the Simple Way and continued his journey home.

## CONCLUSION

**I**N order to fully appreciate the singular purity of the doctrine of Laotze and its reactionary effect on contemporary thought in China, it is necessary to refer to the religious system then dominant in the Empire, namely, Shintoism.

It is believed to have been established under the protection of the Chow Dynasty, which began in the person of Wu Wang, in 1122 B.C. It had many of the elements of a natural religion, and certainly bears the marks of a gradual evolution of the religious idea, being wholly free from the encumbrance of a mythological development. Its central concept is that of Humanity being the offspring of Heaven and Earth; whence arises the threefold division of the Spirits or Shins worshipped by the Chinese.

The First Order, that of Celestial Spirits, is headed by Shang-ti, the Supreme Ruler of Heaven. Beneath this Supreme Intelligence are five other Rulers and a host of Celestial Intelligences, including the Spirits of the Sun and Stars, of the Moon and the Planets.

The Second Order consists of Human Spirits, including the host of departed ancestors, and to these the most sincere respect was paid by the people and their rulers. The human being was said to have two souls: one of a celestial nature and origin, which, after death, went to Tien (Heaven), the other being of an earthly nature, to

which it reverted entirely after death. This is the reason for the expression "going up and down," used by the Chinese to signify death, or the separation of the celestial from the natural soul. The same idea is voiced in Solomon's Song (chap. xii. 7): "Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit to God who gave it." In the Testament writings also there is this expression: "Who knoweth the soul of the beast that goeth down, and the soul of man that ascendeth on high?"

The souls of ancestors were worshipped in all sincerity and with many ceremonies, in the full belief that the souls themselves were present at the sacrifices and pageant. Thus we find it stated in the *Shu King* that Yu Shun, the Emperor, after his accession to the throne, "received the conclusion in the temple of his accomplished ancestor," and after his tour of the country "he came to the polite ancestor and made use of a single victim."

The Third Order of *Shins* were the terrestrial or nature spirits, animating the four elements under a variety of forms, together with a vast array of peculiarly choice "blends" in the shape of winged beasts, fiery flying serpents, and other monsters, which some believe to have had actual existence in ancient times, although now extinct, but which were no doubt derived from composite types of the normal denizens of the four elements. These terrestrial spirits were said to be resident in the bodies of inanimate objects, and in animals of every kind, according to their several natures, though they were not visible to the human eye.

No mention is made of evil spirits in this system of the Chow-li, nor are future rewards and punishments referred to, though the power of rewarding and punishing is certainly ascribed to Shang-ti, the Supreme Ruler of the Celestial

World. Indeed, it seems to have been accepted as a matter of course that the superior part of man, his celestial soul, went, after death, to its own sphere ; and the inferior part, the terrestrial soul, to its lower sphere. Neither was called good or bad, but each was supposed to enjoy its own nature unaffected by either reward or punishment. But all earthly rewards and punishments were regarded as the decrees of Heaven, and this belief led the people into a stoical indifference to moral merit and demerit and disregard of their physical condition, while, on the other hand, it fostered servility and greatly aided the tyranny and oppression of unjust rulers.

Thus, with not even the moderating effects of a popular belief in future reward or punishment to restrain worldly ambition or to stimulate public duty, the people would feel at liberty to indulge themselves on every possible occasion ; their chief, and perhaps only consideration, being to avoid the displeasure of those in authority above them. In the absence of any ethical system or any body of teaching which made direct appeal to the higher nature of man, it was only possible to expect a steady moral degeneration in which tyranny and oppression would be met with servility and deception. Desire for position and wealth would no doubt act as stimulants to action among the people, while fear of the loss of these advantages would tend to restrain their rulers. Of self-restraint, or of good done upon purely moral considerations, there can have been but little, the altruistic sense being, in course of time, wholly obliterated or paralysed.

There was not any recognised order of priesthood in that day in China. Public worship and festivals were conducted by those holding office as Ministers of State.

Only the Emperor himself might sacrifice to the Supreme Spirit: only the Emperor and Princess to the spirits of the earth and harvest, and so on, a regular scale of ministrations being allotted to the various official degrees in the State. In connection with this State religion of the Chow Dynasty, we find records of magical practices, invocations to spirits, thaumaturgy, divination, and prognostics. It was the very quintessence of priestcraft and ritualistic imposture. Originally it held, doubtless, the elements of a good and healthy system of thought and practice, but as those in authority gradually warped it to their own selfish purposes, it became more and more the depository of all that was pernicious and degenerate. Instead of ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, it was used as a means to feed the ambition and avarice of their rulers.

Such, then, was the State religion into which the Apostle of Simplicity was born. The particular line of mental and spiritual evolution by which Laotze came into possession of this purely moral doctrine of the *Tao* will never be traced; but it was in the capacity of Royal Librarian, possibly, that he had access to the fragments of a then ancient code, of which the world has since lost all original record, save that contained in the compilations of Confucius, where it is mentioned, and the present work, in which it is stated anew. Laotze frequently refers to "the ancients," and appears to have known something of their beliefs and methods of life, to the original simplicity and virtue of which his whole teaching tends.

This teaching must be judged on its own merits as an ethical system in relation to the conditions of life to which it was intended to apply. It cannot be said to be an evolution of the age in which the Old Philosopher lived,



as was the contemporary teaching of Confucius, and which may be regarded as a revival of all that was originally intended by the State religion of the Chow-li ; neither did it lend itself to a sympathetic reception by the followers of the Shinto religion. Rather must it be regarded as an inspiration, and it was not long before it came to be regarded and popularly received in that light. Its peculiarity consists in its great purity, simplicity, and altruism—qualities which by no means distinguished the age and country in which it was enunciated—while its close rapport with the teachings of Christianity entitle it to the highest esteem by all who are favourably disposed to the gospel of peace and goodwill. Considering the conditions under which it was delivered, we cannot but regard the doctrine of the Simple Way with the deepest interest, and although we know practically nothing of Laotze apart from his book and the later writings of Chuang-Tze, his follower, it is impossible to read it through even once without catching some very vivid glimpses of the benevolent old man.

And from all we see, the man and his book are in accord with his teaching. Apart from the merits of the doctrine, the mere writing of this book at such an advanced age—its lucidity of expression, its glancing wit, its profound depth, its brevity, simplicity, and candour—must secure to Laotze the credit of an unique literary achievement. Judged by the standard of merit contained in the last chapter of this book, Laotze's work is justified.

In regard to the doctrine itself, one may judge from a thoughtful study of the original enunciation, or that form in which it was delivered by its early promulgators, far better than by a study of that modern admixture of Shintoism and Buddhism which is current under the name of Taoism,

and which cannot rightly be regarded as constituting an expression of the pure teaching of Laotze.

Of the qualities which distinguish a pure religious teaching, Lecky writes with great discernment, for such teaching is not solely to be judged by its corporate action, by the institutions which it creates, by the part which it plays in the government of the world without. "It is to be found," he says, "much more in its action on the individual soul, and especially in those times when man is most isolated from society. It is in furnishing the ideas and motives of individual life, in guiding and purifying the emotions, in promoting habits of thought and feeling that rise above the things of earth; in the comfort it can give in age, sorrow, disappointment, and bereavement; in the seasons of sickness, weakness, declining faculty, and approaching death—it is in these that its power is most felt."

Regarded in this light, the teaching of Laotze does not suffer by comparison with any of the great religious systems of the world, and when the question is finally forced upon our consideration, as to where our modern civilisation is leading us, it is to some expression of the doctrine of Original Simplicity that our great thinkers will inevitably revert.

# EVIDENCE FOR A FUTURE LIFE

A TRANSLATION OF GABRIEL DELANNE'S IMPORTANT WORK  
"L'ÂME EST IMMORTELLE"

BY

H. A. DALLAS

Author of "Gospel Records Interpreted by Human Experience"

*Demy 8vo. 7s. 6d. net*

"A most fascinating work on the subject of psychic phenomena. . . . Even the sceptic, no less than the average man, who is disinclined to concern himself with evidences of the supernatural which clash with his preconceived beliefs, will find a vast deal of food for study and reflection in these pages."—**The Yorkshire Post.**

"It covers the whole field of spiritualism in a perfectly serious, rational, and scientific manner."—**The Daily Express.**

"Whatever conclusion we may form on the great theme it develops, M. Delanne's book, which Mr. Dallas has admirably translated and edited, is *from beginning to end profoundly interesting*. It is written from the standpoint of high philosophic and scientific culture, and will supply for numbers of minds precisely that kind of evidence which the present condition of opinion and of feeling as to life's ultimate mystery seems most to require."—**The Christian World.**

---

LONDON: PHILIP WELLBY, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

# OBERMANN

BY

ETIENNE PIVERT DE SENANCOUR

Translated from the French, with Biographical and  
Critical Introduction by

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

*Crown 8vo. 6s. net*

"A Spiritual Autobiography, rich in the invitation to think, alive with the quest of truth, and yet full of speculative unrest. . . . Matthew Arnold, who was the first Englishman of any eminence to recognise the great claims of Senancour, asserted that the stir of all the main forces by which modern life is impelled lives in the letters of 'Obermann.' The value of this edition is greatly enhanced by the critical appreciation with which Mr. Waite has enriched a book that deserves to be much more widely known."—**The Standard.**

"Readers who only know the name of 'Obermann' from Matthew Arnold's frequent references have now the opportunity of studying that remarkable piece of introspective writing in an excellent translation, and the personality of its author in a well-informed and thoughtful essay."—**The Times.**

"De Senancour is likely to outlast the influence of Rousseau and Chateaubriand, simply because he founds his ecstasy upon the intellect. . . . One who will live with the authors of Werther, of Childe Harold, of Réné, of Alastor, of Ossian."—**The Daily Chronicle.**

---

LONDON: PHILIP WELLBY, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.









